THREE ESSAYS ON GRACE, FAITH, AND EXPERIENCE.

WHEREIN SEVERAL GOSPEL TRUTHS ARE STATED AND ILLUSTRATED,

AND

THEIR OPPOSITE ERRORS POINTED OUT.

BY SAMUEL ECKING.

TO THIS SECOND EDITION ARE ADDED,

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR; CONSIDERATIONS ON THE FAITH OF DEVILS; THE CONFESSION OF FAITH DELIVERED AT HIS ORDINATION; AND A FEW OBSERVATIONS ON SANDEMAN AND CUDWORTH.

This is the true Grace of God wherein ye ſtand.---1 Peter iv. 12.
Earneſtly contend for the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints.---Jude, verſe 3.
Experience worketh Hope.---Rom. v. 4.

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1791.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Editor thinks it neceſſary to inform the reader, that the NOTES to which the ſignature—Ed. is annexed, are added by himſelf, and of courſe he will not conſider Mr. ECKING as accountable for any thing they may contain.

The ſmall tract upon THE FAITH OF DEVILS, has been twice printed before; and as it is a defence of a propoſition in THE ESSAY ON FAITH, it ſeemed neceſſary to print it here along with the propoſition which occaſioned it.

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH, delivered at the author's ordination to the paſtoral care of the church in CHESTER, was found amongſt his papers, prepared for the preſs by himſelf, and may ſerve to give the reader a general view of his doctrinal ſentiments at the time of his ordination.

The few OBSERVATIONS UPON SANDEMAN AND CUDWORTH, were alſo found by the Editor amongſt his ſhort-hand manuſcripts; and as they contain a BRIEF STATEMENT of the difference that ſubſiſted between theſe writers and Mr. ECKING, upon a very important point of doctrine, it was thought the reader might not be diſpleaſed with having them inſerted in this edition.

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A ſhort ACCOUNT of the AUTHOR.

IF the obſervation of a late ſenſible writer be well founded, viz. "That a reader ſeldom peruſes a book "with pleaſure, till he knows ſomething particular about "the author of it," it may be preſumed, that, upon a republication of the following Eſſays, any other apology for prefixing this brief account of the writer, will be deemed unneceſſary, eſpecially by ſuch as approve of the doctrine contained in them.

Mr. SAMUEL ECKING was born at Shrewſbury, Dec. 5, 1757. By the mother's ſide he was deſcended from two very ancient and reſpectable families (the Addertons and Blodwells) from whom his mother inherited a handſome property. But unfortunately ſhe married a perſon of imprudent conduct, who, in a few years, ſquandered it all away, and left her with two children, a daughter four years old, and Samuel, about two. Being now reduced to penury, ſhe retired from Shrewſbury to a cottage about two miles off, where, for the ſpace of two years, ſhe earned, with her own hands, a ſubſiſtence for herſelf and children. Her circumſtances at laſt drew the attention and compaſſion of her friends, who removed her reſidence to Shrewſbury, and placed her in a ſituation ſomewhat more comfortable. Here ſhe was enabled to put her children to ſchool, and a relation of hers dying ſoon afterwards, ſhe became again entitled to a conſiderable property, part of which went to extinguiſh her huſband's debts, which amounted to upwards of 1100l.

Mr. ECKING was at this time about twelve years of age, of a diſpoſition naturally ſedate, ſtudious, and thoughtful, and applied himſelf to learning with ſuch diligence and induſtry, that at the age of fifteen he was taken into an academy kept by Mr. Boore, in Shrewſbury, in the capacity of an uſher, where he continued upwards

of two years, until the deceaſe of the maſter put an end to the ſchool. By this time, Mr. ECKING had acquired ſo much favour and reputation in the ſchool, that he was importuned both by parents and ſcholars, to undertake the maſterſhip, which, however, he declined, on account of his youth, and engaged himſelf again as an uſher, in a reſpectable academy in the ſame town, under the direction of Mr. Gentleman, a diſſenting miniſter, with whom he continued till towards the cloſe of the year 1777; and in January 1778, he opened a ſchool himſelf, in which ſtation he continued acquiring additional reputation, till his removal to Cheſter.

WE learn from the diſcourſe preached on occaſion of his death *, that he himſelf had ſaid, "He was not without "ſome awakenings of conſcience, even in his very "early years; not enough indeed to break the natural "attachment of the heart to vanity and folly; yet enough "to reſtrain him from running into thoſe vices which the "generality of young men give way to; and enough to "convince him, when he had acquired more experience, "that there may be ſerious alarms in the mind, concern-"ing the evil conſequences of ſin, productive alſo of "many ſeemingly good reſolutions, and a temporary re-"gularity of conduct (which are now often depended on "as hopeful ſigns of true grace) while the heart is deſti-"tute of the knowledge of God the Saviour, and without "one ſpark of real religion." It is evident, not only from the report of his friends, but alſo from a journal, which he kept in ſhort hand, and which is entitled, "The experience of a ſaved ſinner," that his mind was early occupied with religious concerns. The following words are prefixed to the journal, dated January 9, 1777, "I have wrote an account of the way and manner in "which the Lord began his work upon my ſoul, and "how he carried it on to this preſent time, in a ſmall "tract, which may be found amongſt my papers." This

* By Mr. Joſeph Jenkins.

muſt

muſt relate to what had happened before he was nineteen years of age.

His uſual attendance for public worſhip was at the eſtabliſhed church, under the miniſtry of Mr. De Courcey, of whom he became a warm admirer, as well as an intimate acquaintance. But when the diſpute about baptiſm began in Shrewſbury, in the year 1776, and in which ſo many pens were engaged, it ſeems to have excited much of his attention. Being educated in the principles of Pædobaptiſm, it does not appear, that before the commencement of this diſpute, he had ever been led to ſuſpect the validity of that practice. "The controverſy, "however," ſays the writer before quoted, "had that ef-"fect upon him, which it were to be wiſhed, all books "of controverſy might have upon their readers, to en-"gage him to ſtudy the Bible more diligently, and re-"ceive the truth from God himſelf." He has frequently related the following circumſtance reſpecting that affair: When his mind firſt began to waver upon the ſubject, the preſident of the academy, who appears to have been not a little concerned upon the occaſion, put into his hands a very popular publication in defence of infant ſprinkling, earneſtly requeſting him to read it attentively, and expreſſing his confidence that it would effectually eſtabliſh his mind. With this requeſt he chearfully complied, and having diligently peruſed the book, returned it to the gentleman, aſſuring him, that his mind was now *fully ſatisfied*; adding, however, that he ſuppoſed it would ſurpriſe him to hear, that it was of the *impropriety* of the practice contended for in it.

In conſequence of this change in his view of the ſubject, he was ſoon after baptized upon a profeſſion of his faith, and added to a Baptiſt congregation at Shrewſbury, of which he continued a member upwards of five years.

Being a young man of promiſing abilities, he was occaſionally called upon by the church to exerciſe his gifts ſometimes among the brethren, and ſometimes in th

adjacent villages; and as the church had it ultimately in view to give him a call to the public work of the miniſtry, he was requeſted to preach before them a public diſcourſe, which he accordingly did, from 1 Pet. i. 5.— "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith un- "to ſalvation?" A copy of this diſcourſe is found amongſt his ſhort-hand manuſcripts, with the following words annexed, "The above was delivered in the Baptiſt "meeting-houſe, in Shrewſbury, June 24, 1781, being "for the trial of the author's abilities, and which being "approved, he was, by that church, called to the work "of the miniſtry."

TOWARDS the concluſion of the ſame year, Mr. ECKING accepted of an invitation from a few ſcattered individuals at Cheſter, to preach to them, and ſettled there with his family ſoon after. He had not been there more than a year, before a few perſons were united together in a profeſſion of the faith, over whom he was appointed paſtor, in the month of April, 1783. But between the time of his coming to Cheſter and his ordination to this office, an important and remarkable change took place in his religious ſentiments; *—a change which, though it may be ſaid to originate in a ſingle point, yet is that point of ſuch a peculiar nature, as ultimately to diffuſe itſelf through the whole ſyſtem of goſpel doctrine, practice and experience.

THAT a real and eſſential change took place in his ſentiments at this time, might be eaſily demonſtrated from a compariſon of his manuſcript diſcourſes, and the journal of his experience, prior to this period, with the principles contained in the following eſſays. He had formerly the common popular notions of divine grace, and profeſſed the doctrine of free juſtification, through the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, by faith without works; but (as

* It is but juſtice to mention, that his mind was firſt ſtruck at hearing an occaſional ſermon preached at Cheſter, by Mr. Joſeph Jenkins, of Wrexham.

is too commonly the caſe) he did not in reality perceive the true grace of God in its freedom and ſuitableneſs to his caſe, as a guilty, unqualified ſinner; nor did he underſtand how the work finiſhed by the Son of God in his death, and declared to be accepted in his reſurrection, was *alone* ſufficient to relieve his mind, and give him immediate peace with God, without taking into his view ſome previous work of grace wrought in his heart, diſtinct from the knowledge of Chriſt, and as a neceſſary requiſite to warrant his hope in him. This radical miſtake, which is natural to the human heart, made the goſpel appear to him in a conditional point of view, ſo that he expected no comfort from it, but through the medium of ſome favourable ſymptoms about himſelf. When he thought he diſcovered theſe, he was encouraged, upon that ground, to truſt in Chriſt, as having now a better opinion of himſelf; but when theſe favourable ſymptoms diſappeared, his hopes ſunk, his mind was diſtreſſed, and he could find nothing in the goſpel itſelf ſuited to relieve him. Thus his happineſs and comfort partook of all the changes and fluctuations of its unſteady foundation, whilſt the whole exerciſes of his mind turned upon a legal or ſelf-righteous hinge. But when it pleaſed the Lord to draw his attention to the divine evidence beaming in the goſpel of the *perfection* and *ſufficiency* of the obedience of the Son of God to juſtify the ungodly—its *ſuitableneſs* in all reſpects to the caſe of helpleſs, periſhing ſinners,—and particularly its immediate *nearneſs* and abſolute *freeneſs* to the very worſt of mankind, who can find no good thing *in themſelves* to warrant their claim, but every thing the reverſe—then his mind was immediately relieved, he was delivered from a ſpirit of bondage, and filled with all joy and peace in believing, abounding in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit, for now he found all his ſalvation and all his deſire, ſimply in what the goſpel teſtifies of Chriſt.

THAT glorious truth which was now become the delight and happineſs of his own ſoul, gave a new turn and refreſhing ſavour to his diſcourſes from the pulpit, and invigorated him in the diſcharge of the duties of his office.

" It raiſed him up," he ſaid, " from that ſtate of barren-
" neſs and deſertion in his own ſoul, that leaning to
" himſelf, through which he was in doubt, whether he
" ſhould have been able to preach another ſermon."

THE important difference which he now perceived between the commonly-received doctrine, and the apoſtolic goſpel, in its primitive ſimplicity, freeneſs and glory, made him reſolve to publiſh his ſentiments to the world. Accordingly, in the year 1784, the following performance made its firſt appearance; and his deſign therein, as he himſelf informs us in the preface, was, " to recom-
" mend the diſallowed goſpel as the ONE THING
" NEEDFUL; as that alone which can give peace at
" the laſt, and land a ſinner ſafe and happy on the hea-
" venly ſhore."

THE oppoſition which the author met with, on account of this publication, was ſuch as an attentive reader might reaſonably expect. Several of his former very intimate aſſociates in the miniſtry, and who had profeſſed the higheſt regard for him, raiſed the greateſt outcry of HERESY againſt it. Whatever reaſon Mr. ECKING might have had for affirming, in the introduction to his Eſſay on Experience, that modern *Catholic Charity* " has it in her
" nature to perſecute the friends of truth, even unto
" ſtrange cities," it is certain that experience, in this caſe, had no tendency to alter his opinion: For it is well known, that ſome, who value themſelves much upon the liberality of their minds, and their catholic charity, and who, under a ſpecious ſemblance of moderation and candour, offer a comprehenſion, from which none ſeem excluded, were nevertheleſs amongſt his moſt zealous oppoſers, and manifeſted in their conduct towards him the greateſt diſingenuity. Juſtice to the truth for which he contended, required that he ſhould not paſs theſe things altogether unnoticed. He wrote a letter to one of this ſtamp, from whoſe character for catholiciſm, and eminence among his fraternity, a different conduct might have been expected. The following is an extract of it:
" By what kind of penetration, ſir, could you perceive
" that

" that I had refined my ſentiments into rank Sandemani-
" aniſm, when you ſeriouſly declared to more than one
" of your friends, that you had not read the book, nor
" would do it at preſent, if you did at all?—The eſſays
" I have publiſhed contain what I believe to be the truth,
" as it is in Jeſus, and (without the fear of man) I hope,
" in the fear of God, ſteadily to maintain them, in oppo-
" ſition to every error which affects them. But if you,
" or any other perſon, will point out to me, wherein they
" ſtand oppoſed to the ſcriptures, I ſhall attentively con-
" ſider what is ſaid; and this will better become perſons
" of your character, than to wrap up your mind in pre-
" judice, and, ſheltered behind the walls of fancied or-
" thodoxy, to pour out vollies of abſurd aſſertions, inſtead
" of ſcripture proofs, and fair argument."

Mr. ECKING did not ſurvive the publication of the Eſſays above eight months; his indiſpoſition began with a ſevere cold, and terminated in a putrid fever. On the Lord's-day, Jan. 16, 1785, he preached in the forenoon, from John xv. 12. " This is my commandment, That
" ye love one another, as I have loved you." And in the afternoon, from Pſalm cii. 16, 17. " When the Lord
" ſhall build up Zion, he ſhall appear in his glory. He
" will regard the prayer of the deſtitute, and not deſpiſe
" their prayer." Two diſcourſes that will long be remembered by ſome that heard them. On the afternoon of that day, his hoarſeneſs increaſed to ſuch a degree, that it was painful for him to ſpeak, ſo that he was conſtrained to decline preaching in the evening, as was uſual to him. His indiſpoſition gradually increaſed during the remainder of that week; yet he attended his ſchool, as uſual (for he kept one) and on Saturday morning went into his ſtudy to prepare for preaching next day, though much againſt the inclination of his friends. The paſſage of ſcripture he had fixed his attention upon, was Acts xi. 23, " Who when he came, and had ſeen the grace of
" God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with pur-
" poſe of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Upon this ſubject, as uſual, he wrote his thoughts pretty fully;

fully; his plan of diſcuſſion was as follows: 1. To give ſome account of the grace of God. 2. Enquire how this grace makes itſelf manifeſt among any people, ſo as to be ſeen. 3. Shew that every Chriſtian will be glad when he ſees the grace of God in others. 4. Shew what is included in the exhortation. This diſcourſe he was prevented from delivering, for his indiſpoſition increaſing, and an apothecary being called in, he was immediately ordered to his bed, and though the utmoſt attention was paid him, by a very reſpectable phyſician, yet ſo rapidly did his diſorder proceed, as entirely to baffle the utmoſt power of medicine.

In a few days, being apprehenſive of his approaching diſſolution, he called together the church, and took his laſt, ſolemn, affectionate, and comfortable farewell of them; told them he was going to the arms of Jeſus, and that he hoped, ere long, to welcome them all there. The chief thing he dwelt upon, was, the contempt and ſcorn which he foreſaw would attend their attachment to the truth. He took great pains to reconcile their minds to this, and with much earneſtneſs exhorted them to "hold faſt the truth," adding, "*the truth is great, and* "*will ſupport you.*"

After this interview he enjoyed but ſparingly the undiſturbed exerciſe of his thinking powers; yet an interval ſcarcely returned, in which he did not gladden the hearts of thoſe around him, by the joyful manner in which he ſpoke of the conſolations of the goſpel; and, on the 5th of February, he cloſed his days, in the 27th year of his age, exchanging a ſtate of warfare and trial for the bleſſedneſs of the dead who die in the Lord.

Mr. Ecking's ſtature was under the middle ſize, his body ſlender, and very active; his complexion ſwarthy, his countenance grave and ſedate, and a juſt index of his mind. His converſation, particularly after the alteration in his religious ſentiments, was chearful and lively, yet happily ſeaſoned with incorruptneſs, gravity, ſincerity. His imagination was warm and active; and he

he poſſeſſed a talent for poetical compoſition, which cultivation (had his days been prolonged) might have raiſed to ſome degree of excellence. Many of his juvenile pieces may be found in The Goſpel Magazine, with his ſignature S. E-k--g affixed to them, about the years 1778 and 1779.

His daily employment was the education of youth. His ſchool at Cheſter conſiſted of about half a dozen boarders, and about twenty day-ſcholars, to which he paid all the attention the moſt anxious parent could reaſonable expect. His diſcourſes from the pulpit were very animated and intereſting; and his manner of preaching bore a great reſemblance to that of his writing in the Eſſays; for when he opened up the doctrine contained in a paſſage, he generally took occaſion to point out to his hearers, how it ſtood oppoſed to the current doctrine of the day. He appears to have enjoyed much happineſs in his paſtoral capacity, and in the few connected with him. In a letter to the writer of this account (then at London) dated January 18th, 1784, he ſays, "We go on very com-
" fortably, both miniſter and people deſire to know no-
" thing, but Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified. Three per-
" ſons have been added ſince you went, and as many more
" will ſoon be baptized to that end. But we do not take
" the moſt effectual method to have what is called *a flou-*
" *riſhing church*; yet if but two or three are united toge-
" ther in the *one hope*, loving and living upon *the precious*
" *truth*, however poor, mean, and deſpiſed they may be,
" I ſhall think myſelf authorized to call them *a flouriſhing*
" *church*."

How affectionate he was as a huſband, how tender as a parent, how pleaſant and amiable as a friend and companion, will long be remembered by thoſe who enjoyed an intimacy with him. He regarded his domeſtic connections with peculiar tenderneſs: In the letter above quoted he ſays, "I have had ſome trials in Providence, ſince I
" ſaw you: my dear little boy was taken from me by
" the ſmall-pox, in September laſt. I hardly ever knew

" any

" any trial in compariſon of that; but it becomes me to " *be ſtill*, and to hold my peace. He who preſides over " the affairs of the world cannot be miſtaken in any thing " he does; nor will he do any thing but what ſhall work, " together with his other diſpenſations, to promote his " own glory, and his people's preſent and eternal good. " It is a joyful reflection, however, to me, that *of ſuch is* " *the Kingdom of Heaven*; and therefore, my love to him " ſhould cauſe me to be glad."

His unremitted diligence in the various duties of his office and calling, will appear from the following brief detail of a week's employment: On the Lord's-day he preached three times, without the aſſiſtance of any other perſon, in conducting any part of the public worſhip; attended his ſchool the five ſucceeding days; and on Saturday he ſpent almoſt the whole day in his ſtudy. And here it is worth noticing, that though he preached without notes, yet his diſcourſes were pretty fully wrote down in ſhort hand, the preceding day. Beſides what has already been mentioned, he held a converſation-meeting with his people, at his own houſe, on Tueſday evenings, preached a public diſcourſe on Wedneſday night, held a prayer meeting on Friday night in public, and viſited his flock, at their own houſes, as occaſion required. And when we take into view, that it was amidſt ſuch a multiplicity of labours he compoſed the following Eſſays, it is not to be wondered at, that ſome defects and inaccuracies are to be found in them, but rather, that they have ſo many excellencies. The great and leading principles contained in them are admirable, *viz.* That Chriſt is held forth, in the word of God, as the ſure, immediate, and only foundation of hope, for guilty, periſhing ſinners, as ſuch—That no inherent qualification is required, as previouſly neceſſary to a ſinner's believing and hoping in Chriſt—That no *ſaving* change, nor any *true* principle of grace is wrought in his heart, before he believes in Chriſt, as a free and all-ſufficient Saviour, ſuited to his caſe, as a ſinner—And that all true peace of conſcience, Chriſtian experience, and real holineſs in heart or life, originate in this

this faith of the Son of God, and must constantly be supported and influenced by it. Those who relish these great truths, will easily pardon a few occasional mistakes in the author's attempt to elucidate them.

THOUGH Mr. ECKING was but a short time engaged in the pastoral office, yet it served to convince him, that it was essentially necessary to the welfare of a church, to adhere strictly to the exercise of that discipline which the Lord Jesus himself hath instituted. He has frequently been heard deeply to lament the little attention paid to this important matter, by those societies who profess to copy the example of the apostolic churches; and there is no reason to doubt, that, had his life been prolonged, he would have attempted a reformation in many parts of the church order. But the Sovereign Disposer of all things saw meet to prevent his putting these designs into execution, by calling him to Himself.

POSTSCRIPT.

AS the first appearance of this treatise excited some enquiries concerning the people with whom the author of it was connected; and as it is not unlikely that this second edition may produce the same; the following short account is offered for the satisfaction of such:

Mr. ECKING left behind him about twenty-three persons, who were considered as united together in a church capacity; but he had not been long removed from them before their union began to disappear. This may be accounted for in a measure by the following considerations.

When he was brought to see the all-sufficiency and necessity of *the finished obedience of the Son of God*, his mind was so much impressed with its importance, that the remaining short period of his life was occupied so intensely in setting it forth and opposing it to every other foundation of hope before God, that he left himself but little time to consider or enforce the order and practice of the primitive

primitive churches: things ſo neceſſary to preſerve an union founded in the belief and love of the ATONEMENT. That Mr. E. did not make the ſame progreſs in theſe things as he did in publiſhing the goſpel is beyond all contradiction; for the order and practice of the church continued the ſame as are found in other diſſenting congregations.

It is, nevertheleſs, but juſtice to him here to add, what indeed has been already intimated, that during the latter period of his life, his attention was drawn pretty much to theſe things,* and he was about to make a vigorous attempt to accompliſh a reformation among his people, when death put an end to his labours, and his flock was left a prey to diſorder.

What the conſequence would have been, if his life had been prolonged, is not to be aſcertained. Some of his religious neighbours thought his removal prevented much harm; and no doubt many religious people, in the days of the apoſtles, viewed the death of Stephen in the ſame point of light. One thing is too true; that partly for want of order and diſcipline, and partly thro' other circumſtances, in a ſhort time there were only ſeven of the perſons he left united, who continued to aſſemble together. Theſe, after ſtruggling for ſome years with various outward perplexities and diſcouragements, which threatened

* In a diſcourſe from Acts 9, 31, ſpeaking of the ordinances as means of edification, particularly the Lord's Supper, he ſays, "If the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of edification, can we be "too often edified? and does not this remove that objection" [which ſome of his own congregation made] "that a frequent "attendance to this takes off our attention from its dignity? The "apoſtles and antient churches met every firſt day of the week "for this end. But when the goſpel order became corrupted, it "was attended to but once a quarter, then once a year; but this "was prieſtcraft and ſuperſtition. Since it has become cuſtomary once "a month; but where have we any command for this? where any "example in the ſcriptures? Can we frequent the means of edification too often? Can we remember Chriſt too often? Can "we ſhew Chriſt's death too frequently? Can we too frequently "confeſs our faith in him, and his ſecond appearing? If not, then "*why is not the goſpel order obſerved among us?*"

tened their utter extinction—in concurrence with ſome other individuals who deſired fellowſhip with them—applied for aſſiſtance to one of the Baptiſt Churches in Scotland. Accordingly in the preſence of one of the Elders of that church who came to Cheſter, the abovementioned ſeven perſons, together with ſeveral others (ſix of whom were baptized at that time) profeſſed their faith in the Son of God, as well as their deſire of cleaving to each other upon *this foundation*. They continue to meet together on every firſt day of the week (1) to read the ſcriptures, (2) exhort one another, (3) pray (4) and ſing praiſes to God, (5) after the example of the firſt churches that in Judea were in Chriſt Jeſus, (6)—(forſaking the common bond of union of a CLERGYMAN) and reſolving to become followers of them. United upon the faith and love of the truth they endeavour to edify one another (7) as they are able: waiting patiently for gifted perſons appearing among themſelves, or being ſent to them from other churches with whom they hold communion, that they may be enabled to be ſet in the primitive church order with their Biſhops and Deacons. (8)

(1) Acts xx. 7. (2) 1 Thes. v. 27. (3) Heb. x. 24, 25.
(4) 1 Tim. ii. 8. (5) Col. iii. 16. (6) Thes. ii. 14.
(7) Thes. v. 11. (8) Eph. iv. 11.——16. Phil. i. 1.

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PREFACE.

IT has been obſerved, that in controverſies about religion moſt parties, however wide in their ſentiments, have claimed the authority and countenance of ſcripture for their reſpective notions. Some on this account have been diſpoſed to fix the charge of inconſiſtency upon the ſacred records; and others, for the ſame reaſon, have thought it neceſſary to have ſome certain rules to interpret ſcripture by. Hence traditions, church-authority, creeds, confeſſions of faith, &c. have been multiplied in great abundance, and are in general thought better calculated to guard againſt hereſy, than that book which is appealed to by all heretics.—The church of Rome has deſervedly been held up to public ridicule, for her pretenſions to infallibility, and for keeping the people in ignorance, by prohibiting the reading of the ſcriptures; happy day that was, therefore, which began the dawn of *Reformation*. But does it not lead us back to ROME, to condemn *free inquiry*, from the fear of innovation? What eſſential difference is there between having the ſcripture wholly kept from our eyes, and ſuffering our underſtanding, judgment, and conſcience to be limited by articles, church-authority, &c.? Do not theſe limitations tend to ſhut us up in as groſs darkneſs, as our anceſtors were covered with, by receiving papal tradition in the room of divine revelation?——The preaching of *Fulgentio* at *Venice*, on Pilate's queſtion, *What is truth?* is not foreign to our purpoſe. He told his hearers that at laſt, after many reſearches, he had found it out, and holding out a New-teſtament, ſaid that it was in his hand; but he put it in his pocket, and coldly added, "*The Book is prohibited.*" What difference would there have been had he ſaid, you may read the book, but its true meaning is prohibited? But what has been the conſequence of introducing this method of preventing hereſies and ſchiſms?

plainly this (not to ſay any thing about extirpation, &c) many have, as it were inſenſibly, been led, to make tradition, and church-authority, their *faith*; and have become the dupes of ſuperſtition, while they have profeſſed to be guided by the word of God! Yet ſince all ſpirits muſt be tried by the ſcriptures—ſince all true church-authority muſt be founded there—and ſince if any man ſpeak not according to the form of ſound words recorded there, it is becauſe there is no light in him, where can Chriſtians appeal but to the ſcriptures? Theſe they are well aſſured, are able to make them wiſe unto ſalvation, through faith in Chriſt Jeſus. *All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works.* The writer of the following pages might tell his reader of his connections with thoſe who are reputed *orthodox*; but as one juſtly obſerves, "Othodoxy (like almoſt all martial terms of controvertiſts) is a very vague, equivocal word.—In its original and true import, it ſignifies a *right belief:* but, (ſuch is the fate of language!) in one latitude it means a belief of one thing, in another the belief of another thing, quite contrary. In theſe Eſſays, let it ſtand for what Paul calls *the belief of the truth*, not the belief of the truth as it is in this creed, or in that, or in any other, but *as it is in Jeſus*," —He preſents them to the reader's ſerious attention ſubmiſſively and impartially to be tried by the heavenly oracles, in their moſt ſimple and obvious meaning, comparing ſpiritual things with ſpiritual things; aſſuring him, that he wiſhes them to have no other influence, than what they may have borrowed from thence.—His grand deſign is to recommend the diſallowed goſpel as the ONE THING NEEDFUL; as that alone which can give peace at the laſt, and land a ſinner ſafe and happy on the heavenly ſhore. The glorious goſpel, in its primitive ſimplicity, freeneſs and glory, ſtands oppoſed, on the one hand, to ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſelf-dependance in all its forms; and, on the other, to carnal-confidence, worldly

worldly mindedneſs, and ſelf-indulgence: for while it makes ample proviſion for the moſt wretched circumſtances a ſinner can be in, by laying a ſufficient foundation for his hope in the Redeemer's finiſhed work; it exhibits the moſt powerful incentives to true godlineſs, and makes the keeping of Chriſt's commands eſſential to the Chriſtian character. On this account it is expected that the *ſelf-righteous* and the *licentious* (however ambiguouſly they hold thoſe tenets, which lead them to ſelf-dependance and ſelf-indulgence) will be much diſguſted with what they find in the following pages: and the writer frankly acknowledges that he has not deſigned, in a ſingle line, to pleaſe either of them; but on the contrary has endeavoured to ſet forth his ſentiments in ſuch a light, as to ſtand in direct oppoſition to their notions of chriſtianity.—The doctrines oppoſed are moſtly ſtated in the very words of ſome who have written in favour of them, but without mentioning the names of the authors; the reaſon of which is, that *perſons* or particular *parties* are not attacked, but *errors*, let them be found with what perſons or parties ſoever. The ſame method has been occaſionally obſerved, in regard to thoſe who have maintained the doctrines herein ſtated; and when the reader is referred to an author's name, it is not with the leaſt deſign, either to reſt the ſentiment upon his credit, or ſcreen the writer from cenſure, under covert of another's reputation: for though he highly eſteems their writings, who have been valiant for the truth, yet if ten thouſand writers, in the higheſt reputation for orthodoxy, could be produced in confirmation of what is here ſaid, unleſs they were prefaced with, *Thus ſaith the Lord*, they will only ſtand as ſo many inſignificant cyphers, in the eſteem of thoſe who have *an ear to hear what the ſpirit ſaith unto the churches*. On the other hand, if the reaſoning of theſe Eſſays be found to accord with the *word of truth*, it will be a very ſmall circumſtance with diſcerning Chriſtians, though the wiſe, the learned, or the ſeemingly religious, ſhould unite to reprobate the book, and load its author with reproach; for what are

the higheſt ſounding names among men, to the name and authority of CHRIST? And what ſhould Chriſtians fear, though their faith and practice, provoke the contempt of nations? Would any ſtrange thing happen to to them if it ſhould be ſo? nay verily, for ſo perſecuted they the prophets and apoſtles, which have gone before them.—The writer has nothing to ſay in favour of the *manner* in which this work is executed. He makes no pretenſion to accuracy of language, or refinement of ſtyle; but is conſcious of many deficiencies in each of theſe reſpects. All he aims at is to convey his meaning, in the moſt ſimple and intelligible manner he can. If he has made known what he intended, by what he has declared, the *ſummit* of his attempt, as to *manner*, is obtained.—If it ſhould pleaſe the great Prophet of the church, who alone can teach to profit, to make uſe of theſe hints to convince any of the error of their way, or to confirm the ſouls of the diſciples, the author's labours will be richly rewarded: but if, after comparing what is written with the Bible, that infallible ſtandard of truth, any ſhould be diſpoſed to condemn it as *heretical*, he has no higher court to appeal to. He is perſuaded, in his own mind, that the remarks are grounded upon the evidence of Moſes and the Prophets, Chriſt and his Apoſtles; but is very willing to allow, what indeed every man has an equal right to, the right of private judgment; and can ſay no more than *I ſpeak as to wiſe men*, JUDGE YE what I ſay, and *Let* EVERY MAN *be fully perſuaded in his* OWN *mind*.

THE

THREE ESSAYS, &c.

ESSAY FIRST.

OF THE NATURE, PURPOSE, MANIFESTATION, WORD, SPIRIT, AND PRINCIPLE, OF GRACE, AS SET FORTH IN SCRIPTURE LIGHT.

SECTION I.

OF THE NATURE OF GRACE IN GENERAL.

THE doctrine maintained by the apoſtles of Chriſt, is diſtinguiſhed from every ſcheme framed by the wiſdom of men, in that it is a ſyſtem of *pure grace*. They aſſerted, that man muſt ſtand before his Maker either upon the footing of the *law of works*; or the *goſpel of grace*. Upon the former ground they fully demonſtrate, that no fleſh living can be accepted, becauſe the *whole world* is become *guilty* before GOD, and ſo juſtly condemned by his law; therefore they aſſert, that if any of the fallen race of Adam are ſaved, it muſt be by ſovereign grace *alone*. In the apoſtles' days, however, many aſſerted with them that ſalvation was of grace, who yet meant ſomething thereby very different, from the obvious ſenſe of their words; and it is hardly to be queſtioned, that the greateſt part of thoſe who call themſelves chriſtians, in our day, will affirm in like manner, that we are ſaved by *grace*; while yet, when they come to explain themſelves upon the point, few will be

be found to underſtand the term, in the ſenſe in which it is plain the apoſtles uſed it.—The inſpired witneſſes, aware of the errors which many ran into in their own day, about *grace*; and alſo of the more general oppoſition that would be made againſt it after their deceaſe; declared themſelves upon the ſubject, with the greateſt preciſion Thus when Peter had written upon the truth of the goſpel, he tells thoſe who had received his doctrine, *this is the* TRUE *grace of God wherein ye ſtand*, 1 Peter, v. 12. It was Paul's peculiar conſolation that the Coloſſians knew the grace of GOD IN TRUTH; Col. i. 6. that is, as oppoſed to every falſhood, or counterfeit of it: they had been taught *the truth as it is in Jeſus*, and ſo had received the grace of God in incorruption. And it was his grief to find, that the Galatians had *fallen from grace*; Gal. v. 4. that is, if we attend to what he ſays in the beginning of this epiſtle, they had received a *perverted* goſpel, which led them to entertain wrong notions of the *true grace* of God. In his epiſtle to the Hebrews, he exhorts profeſſing believers to *Look diligently, leſt any man fail of the grace of God*, &c. Heb. xii. 15.

Now as every one chuſes to affix his own notion to the words of ſcripture which he has occaſion to uſe; and ſeeing that an error about *grace* is, of all others, the moſt dangerous, yea the very ſource of all other errors, under a profeſſion of religion, and muſt therefore prove fatal, if not perceived and corrected; it is needful that we ſhould ſearch diligently into the *true* nature of that grace which is revealed, and by which alone we can be ſaved.

GRACE, in the ſcriptures of truth, ſtands in direct oppoſition to *works* of every kind, and every degree; ſo that it is utterly impoſſible there ſhould be any, even the leaſt mixture of the one with the other; for ſuch

ſuch is the purity of *grace*, and ſo oppoſite in its nature to human *works*, that a coalition would deſtroy its very being; grace would be no more grace. This appears plain from Paul's writings, Rom. xi. 6, *And if of grace, then it is no more of works; otherwiſe grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more of grace, otherwiſe work is no more work.* If this paſſage does not ſtate the moſt glaring oppoſition between works and grace, it is paſt a poſſibility to make a contraſt. They, therefore, who attempt to join them, to the ſame end and for the ſame purpoſe, even though it might be under the moſt plauſible pretence of ſecuring the *intereſts of holineſs*, are under a fatal miſtake in the moſt eſſential points of the goſpel, and as far from ſtanding in *the true grace of God* as the eaſt is from being joined with the weſt. *For to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt*, Rom. iv. 4.

And here let it be carefully obſerved, that the grace of God ſtands in oppoſition, not only to thoſe legal works, by which the Jews went about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, but alſo to *all works* whatever, wrought by the creature. Whether they be works of the law, or works of the goſpel; exerciſes of the heart, or actions of the life, done while we are in a ſtate of nature, or after we are born of God, they are all, and every of them, *equally* ſet aſide, as being either the cauſe, condition, qualification, or medium, either in the purpoſe, manifeſtation, or beſtowment of grace, in any of its abounding bleſſings*; in order that every *ſhadow* of glorying, ſhould be for ever cut off from the creature, and God in Chriſt receive the *unrivalled* honour of ſalvation in all its parts.

Divine

* It muſt be noticed, that the author is here upon the *nature* of divine grace, and therefore diſtinguiſhes it even from its *effects* upon men's hearts and lives, which in ſcripture are ſometimes called *grace*.—Ed.

Divine grace therefore is the *free favour*, the undeſerved compaſſion of Jehovah, through Chriſt Jeſus, to the *abſolutely wretched*; and includes the beſtowment of all ſpiritual and eternal bleſſings.—The properties of divine grace are, *ſovereign*, *rich*, and *free*; that is, *ſovereign*, as it beſtows its favours *where* and on *whomſoever* it pleaſes;—*rich*, as being *exceeding abundant* in all manner of ſupplies, extended to the utmoſt neceſſities of the poor and wretched;—and *free*, becauſe not conferred upon the account of any inviting qualifications, nor rewarding him that willeth or runneth, but, in *all* its beſtowments, wearing the pleaſing appearance of *reigning mercy*. In ſhort, grace confers the greateſt bleſſings and higheſt favours, upon the moſt undeſerving amongſt the ſons of men, according to the *good pleaſure* of the divine goodneſs.—The ſcriptures always preſerve theſe ideas, whenever the term *grace* is mentioned.—Thus the *goſpel* is called *the grace of God*, becauſe it reveals the grace and truth that came by Jeſus Chriſt, and opens up the eternal purpoſes of ſovereign grace and abounding mercy in him. If the *new creature* be at any time deſigned by this term, it ſtill preſerves the ſame endearing ſignification. *For God, who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.* 2 Cor. iv. 6. Titus iii. 4. 6. *Who hath ſaved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpoſe and grace, which was given us in Chriſt Jeſus before the world began:* 2 Tim. i. 9. If acts of *liberality* or a *good converſation*, 2 Cor. viii. 7. be called grace, it directly leads our thoughts from the effect to the cauſe, 2 Cor. ix.

I ſhall cloſe this ſection with the words one had occaſion to uſe when giving cautions againſt the counterfeit

bible is, *the loftineſs of man ſhall be bowed down, and the haughtineſs of man ſhall be made low: and the* LORD ALONE *ſhall be exalted.* It not only forbids creatures glorying in the divine preſence; but ſtrips them of all their fancied importance, and leaves them deſtitute of the leaſt pretence to, or ground of boaſting. Hence the very ſinews of human pride are cut; and every one that is ſaved enters the Kingdom of Heaven upon the ſame footing as a *little child.* But however this ſublime truth is hated, traduced and rejected, by thoſe who fancy themſelves rich, and ſo ſtand in need of nothing; it will ever prove ſalutary to thoſe, who view themſelves as poor and miſerable; becauſe towards ſuch it wears the moſt encouraging, friendly, and ſmiling aſpect: for, if rightly underſtood, the doctrine of divine ſovereignty opens a door of hope, preſents an all-ſufficient relief to thoſe who are juſtly condemned, and on the very verge of deſpair. The ſelf-ſufficient, like their prime leader, go about induſtriouſly to pervert this heavenly doctrine; for though, like him, they uſe ſcripture, and in general terms, talk highly about the eternal purpoſes of grace, yet under that name, they ſet up a thing, contrary in its nature to the *true grace of God.* Such are they who make the *cauſe* of the divine choice to ſalvation and eternal life, to center in ſome *foreſeen* works, pious deſires, repentance, &c. But could we imagine that man appeared, in the fore-knowledge of God, as pure and holy as the angels who ſinned not; yet if that were the *cauſe*, or, in any ſenſe the reaſon, that influenced Jehovah to chuſe them, though we might diſcover *faithfulneſs* and *juſtice* in the Almighty, when accompliſhing his deſigns, we directly loſe ſight of *ſovereign grace.* And though the ſignification of the term *grace* be twiſted and turned by falſe criticiſm, to blind the eyes of the weak and unſtable; yet an authority higher than hu-

man, warrants us to ſay, that if any, or all of the above-mentioned things be the *cauſe* of any being choſen to eternal life, *Grace is no more grace.* Yea, we may go further, and yet keep within the bounds of revealed truth. The eternal purpoſe of grace was not the *effect* of Jehovah's foreknowledge even of the ſpotleſs obedience, and perfect atonement of Chriſt. This is not the *cauſe* of everlaſting love and the eternal purpoſe, but the *fruit and effect* thereof. John. iii. 16. Much leſs then would it comport with the ſcripture account of the eternal purpoſe, or the genuine ſignification of *grace*, to ſay, that foreſeen works or any inward qualities whatever in the creature were the moving cauſe, or even the remoteſt medium of the divine choice.

Again; the ſuppoſition that any thing foreſeen in the creature, influenced the divine choice, is oppoſed by that ſtate which the word of God repreſents mankind univerſally to be in, and in which the divine preſcience muſt have univerſally beheld them, *viz.* a ſtate of ſin, in which they lay polluted as an unclean thing, and obnoxious to the divine wrath; which it would be blaſphemy to ſuppoſe, could draw out the love of the holy God, ſo could not be any reaſon of the divine approbation or choice. But the Holy Ghoſt, even the ſpirit of truth who cannot err, makes void the hypotheſis I am oppoſing, when he tells us, that they who were *choſen in Chriſt Jeſus before the foundation of the world, and predeſtinated to the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt, according to the good pleaſure of his will, to the praiſe of the glory of his grace; were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, and by nature the children of wrath, even as others* Eph. i. 4—6. chap. ii. 1—3. Thus he who ſearches the mind of God reports, and we know that his witneſs is true.

Further; it is contrary to the expreſs declaration of the

the word. Rom. xi. 5. 6, where we are expreſsly taught, that the divine choice proceeds upon grace, in oppoſition to every notion of worthineſs or deſert whatever. We have not the liberty here, even of halving the matter, or adding the leaſt grain of the one to the other, for even this cannot be done without deſtroying both. To ſay, therefore, that the divine choice is of grace, and yet to maintain that it has reſpect to works, under any form or notion that they can be conceived of, is to aſſert, in Paul's eſtimation, the moſt glaring contradiction that can poſſibly be thought of. I can compare it to nothing more fitly, than an attempt to prove that darkneſs is the *cauſe* of light.

Once more; it has been ſaid that election is founded upon a foreknowledge of our *love*. But the carnal mind is enmity againſt God, it is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, ſo that naturally we have no love to God in us: nor can we have any love to God's true character, until the ſovereign, preventing grace of God turn us from darkneſs to light; for till then, we are totally ignorant of the divine beauty. Paul ſets the matter in its true light, Eph. ii. 4, 5, *But God, who is rich in mercy for* HIS GREAT LOVE *wherewith* HE *loved us*, &c. And another ſcripture ſaith, *Herein is love*, NOT THAT WE LOVED GOD *but that* HE LOVED US; And we love him BECAUSE HE FIRST *loved us*. So that it would ſeem, if credit is to be given to God's word, that the notion of foreſeen love in us being the *cauſe* or medium of God's love to us, is a mere human fabrication, and without the ſhadow of foundation, in the ſcriptures.

Laſtly; others who admit the eternal purpoſe, and deny either foreſeen works or foreſeen love to be the *cauſe* of it, nevertheleſs maintain, that it was formed upon the foreknowledge of our faith or believing.

But the full force of this notion is invalidated by this ſingle conſideration, that faith comes as much of God's good pleaſure and ſovereign favour, as the eternal purpoſe itſelf. Divine faith is what no man naturally poſſeſſes; for we are all in unbelief. Faith is of the operation of God; the very verſe which declares ſalvation to be of grace, ſhews that faith is not of ourſelves, *it is the gift of God.* And the perſon who receives this precious favour, can no more account for its being given to him, in the behalf of Chriſt, to believe in his name, while others remain in unbelief, than he can tell whence the wind cometh, or whither it goeth. For however firmly a perſon may have believed, what he imagined was the goſpel of Chriſt, when he truly knows, thro' divine teaching, what the goſpel is, he will plainly diſcover that the Lord was found of him who ſought not after him.

From this brief view of the eternal purpoſe of grace, it appears that divine ſovereignty, wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs, are united in the bleſſed decree of *him* whoſe council ſhall ſtand, and who will do all his pleaſure; and tho' many have been more concerned about the creature's *liberty*, leſt it ſhould be infringed, than Jehovah's *ſovereignty*, leſt it ſhould be limited, yet divine wiſdom ſo directs the accompliſhment of his purpoſe, that his choſen people are made willing in the day of his power; whilſt all who eventually periſh, do ſo with the utmoſt freedom of will: they chuſe what their delight centers in; they love darkneſs rather than light.

To conclude this ſection; ſovereignty is eſſential to DEITY. Sovereignty, directed by unerring wiſdom, is the rule of *all* Jehovah's proceedings. The original *cauſe* of ſalvation, is the *ſelf-moved purpoſe of divine grace*; and the *only cauſe* of any ſinner's damnation

nation is his *own voluntary wickedneſs, and unprovoked rebellion againſt God.*

SECTION III.

THE MANIFESTATION OF GRACE.

PAUL having ſpoken of the purpoſe of grace in Chriſt Jeſus before the world began, tells us that it is *now made manifeſt by the appearing of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who hath aboliſhed death, and brought life and immortality to light through the goſpel.* And that, *Through death he deſtroyed him that had the power of death, that is the Devil.*—Our attention is hereby led to the entrance of ſin into the world. Sin is the cauſe of that death which God our Saviour came to aboliſh. Sin firſt originated in Satan: his ſin was *pride*, which it has been thought, (from John viii, 44,) aroſe in his high mind from ſuppoſing it an indignity to *him*, that the human nature ſhould be the medium of God's communion with his creatures, and ſo *he* left his own habitation. From Chriſt and his Apoſtles comparing thoſe who are enemies to, and corrupters of the goſpel, to the angels that fell, and declaring, that thoſe who apoſtatize, fall into the condemnation of the Devil; it ſeems not unlikely that this was the caſe. However that may be, we are at no uncertainty when the firſt manifeſtation of ſovereign grace was made to man; and this more directly claims our attention.

The word informs us that *man* was made lord of this lower creation, yet himſelf framed to live in abſolute dependance on his Maker, as the author and giver of all things, and the ſovereign of life and death; in the enjoyment of whoſe favour he was

completely happy, and had aſſurance that he ſhould remain ſo, while his dependance upon, and obedience to the word of his Sovereign, were preſerved inviolable. His natural knowledge of God then gave him comfort, while conſcious of having done the things that were well pleaſing in his ſight. He did not ſtand in need of any different revelation of God, to complete that happineſs which he was framed to enjoy; ſo that no intimation was, or conſiſtently could be given him, in his ſtate of innocence, of the purpoſe of grace. But when, thro' affecting *independence*, he became a *tranſgreſſor*, and ſo deſerving of the threatened death;—when *defiled*, and ſo incapable of communion with God;—when nothing but awful, aggravated guilt flew in his face,—nothing but ſhame, terror, and almoſt deſpair filled and harraſſed his conſcience;—when, in conſequence of this, his former knowledge of God heightened, inſtead of allaying the ſtorm within, ſo that nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment was before him;—when emptineſs, vanity, confuſion, diſorder, and wrath were brought upon the whole creation;—when nothing from without Jehovah could move him, to ſuſpend the execution of the threatening, far leſs be a motive to manifeſt his goodneſs;—*then* was the time that infinite wiſdom choſe, for *grace*, in its rich aboundings, to make its welcome appearance; that its true nature and deſign might appear, and that it might be ſeen upon the earth, that ſovereignty, wiſdom, juſtice, and mercy were in the purpoſe of grace perfectly united. *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy ſeed and her ſeed: it ſhall bruiſe thy head, and thou ſhalt bruiſe his heel*, were the bleſſed words that opened the grand myſtery which had been hid with God.—By this glorious ſyſtem of grace the wiſdom

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of God in the permiſſion of ſin was manifeſted, and the honour of the divine government in the diſtruction of Satan's kingdom—the aboliſhment of death—the eſtabliſhment of the divine law—and the eternal ſalvation of the elect—are infallibly ſecured.

The way Jehovah has been pleaſed to make known his deſigns of grace in its various ſtages, is declared by the apoſtle Paul, Heb. i. 1. *God, who at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake in times paſt unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son—who is the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon.*—Hence we ſee, that though there has been but one way of ſalvation ſince the fall, and that according to the purpoſe of God in Chriſt, yet the manifeſtation of it was given at ſundry times, and in divers manners.—I ſhall not attempt here to trace at large, the various openings of the myſtery of grace, previous to the appearance of God our Saviour, but only obſerve, that Paul ranks them under the general name of the *old covenant*; by which I underſtand, that temporary diſpenſation, which God gave to the fathers, which under the veil of types, &c. repreſented the bleſſings of the divine purpoſe, and were patterns of heavenly things, to remain in uſe until the SEED ſhould come. It appears from Gen. iii. 21, and Chap. iv. 4, that ſacrifices were made immediately after the fall, which, without doubt, were intended to ſet forth the great atonement, through faith in which Abel's ſacrifice was accepted, Heb. xi. 4. Not to ſay any thing particularly about Noah, and the manifeſtation of grace to him under certain ſigns, ſuch as the *Ark*, the *Rainbow*, &c. it may be obſerved, that the nature of this covenant was more fully revealed to Abraham, and the bleſſings of grace which it repreſented, more clearly manifeſted to him,

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Gen. chap. xii. 3. xxii. 6—19, John viii. 56, Gal. iii. 8, the Apoſtle Paul alſo confirms this thought, Heb. ix. 15. *And for this cauſe he is the Mediator of the new teſtament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the tranſgreſſions that were under the firſt teſtament, they which are called, might receive the promiſe of eternal inheritance,* ſee v. 26. The one atoning ſacrifice of Chriſt extended itſelf to the tranſgreſſion of Adam, and to all their tranſgreſſions, who believed in the promiſed ſeed to the time that the ſacrifice was made at Calvary, with as much virtue as it does to thoſe who thro' grace believe in him now, as having finiſhed his work, and received the great reward thereof. Some are inclined to think that the *old covenant* began, when the Lord took Iſrael by the hand, and led them forth out of Egypt; and perhaps there is reaſon from the ſcripture to think ſo: tho' without doubt, under the miniſtry of Moſes, the former ſigns were renewed, greatly augmented, and formed into a complete ſyſtem of ceremonial worſhip. The ſacrifices in general—the cities of refuge—the year of jubilee—the land of Canaan—the kings, prophets, and prieſts in Iſrael—the Temple, its utenſils, and every part of the worſhip thereof (of which things we cannot now ſpeak particularly) were all ſhadows of good things to come; but after having anſwered their end, decayed, waxed old, and then vaniſhed away. But I have chiefly to ſpeak of grace and truth as it came by Jeſus Chriſt. And indeed it is only in reference to this that we can behold grace manifeſted under the *old covenant*, for we are not to imagine that any thing pertaining thereunto could take away ſin; nor yet that the privileges of the temporary covenant gave any right to that of the new and everlaſting, *The promiſe, that he ſhould be heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his ſeed through the law,*

law, but through the righteouſneſs of faith: for if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void and the promiſe (that *all nations* of the earth ſhould be bleſſed in Chriſt) *made of none effect.*

GOD—*hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his ſon.* And indeed only the Son could make known the myſtery which lay hid with GOD; for no man hath ſeen God at any time;—the *only begotten Son,* who is in the boſom of the Father, he hath declared him. It will not be amiſs here, to take ſome notice of the perſon of the Son, by whom the eternal purpoſe is made manifeſt. He is frequently ſtiled *the Son of man,* which points out that he is properly a man; and when this title is given him in the New-teſtament, it leads us to think of him as in this reſpect naturally inferior to the angels, and not a creature exiſting before any other creatures were made, as ſome moſt abſurdly ſuppoſe, Heb. i. 1. ch. ii. 14. Yet under this title we are not to ſuppoſe him begotten of man; otherwiſe he could not have been called that HOLY THING. Concerning this important matter, the word of God thus teaches, *Fear not, Mary, for thou haſt found favour with God. And behold, thou ſhalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a ſon—and Mary ſaid unto the angel, how ſhall this be, ſeeing I know not a man? And the angel anſwered, and ſaid unto her, the Holy Ghoſt ſhall come upon thee, and the power of the Higheſt ſhall overſhadow thee:* THEREFORE *alſo that holy thing which ſhall be born of thee, ſhall be called the Son of God.* By the Holy Ghoſt coming upon the virgin, &c. our attention is led to what is written in the Pſalms concerning him. *A body haſt thou prepared me.* This body was ſet apart for Jehovah as his own, ſo that God was manifeſted in the fleſh: for though Jeſus was made a little lower than the angels, for the ſuffering of death; yet he has a name above every name,

name, and all the angels of God are commanded to worſhip him. The prophet foretold, that he who ſhould make his appearance upon the earth, in the fulneſs of time, was in fact no leſs a perſon than *The mighty God! the everlaſting Father!—the Lord God!—the God of the whole earth, &c!*—Iſa. ix, 6, chap. xl, 10, chap. liv. 5. John alſo tells us, that the Word that was in the beginning with God—*was God*; ſo that when *Immanuel* made his appearance, he ſcrupled not to ſay, *I am the Son of God*; by which he meant the ſame as when he ſaid *I and my father are one. The Father is in me and I in him.* In this ſenſe the Jews underſtood him, and counted what he ſaid blaſphemy, for which they put him to death: and in the reſurrection of Chriſt we ſee the Father, who was appealed to on both ſides, interpoſing and deciding the controverſy; by which he cleared Jeſus from the charge of blaſphemy when he *made himſelf God.* He is therefore the living and true God in human nature, and as *Immanuel* he is a true and perfect image of the inviſible God, the brightneſs of the Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon. As the Chriſt of God, it hath pleaſed the Father that in him all fulneſs ſhould dwell, and thoſe who knew him in the days of his fleſh, beheld him *full of grace and truth*, John 1, 14. In agreement with this we are told, that the *grace of God was upon him*, and *grace is poured into his lips.* Moſes ſpeaking of him as the great prophet who ſhould reveal the father's grace, ſays, *him ſhall ye hear*; and that he was well qualified to open the grand myſtery, will appear if we collect what has been already hinted of him. He is truly and properly man, and ſo can hold converſe with us, without his terrors making us afraid. He is holy, harmleſs, undefiled, and ſeparate from ſinners, and ſo a fit perſon for Jehovah to enter into

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covenant with, and communicate his mind unto. He is above all, God bleſſed for evermore, and ſo poſſeſſed of all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge; and being all this in unity of perſon, he could ſtand between God and man—and of courſe, all that he did, or ſpoke, muſt be filled with infinite dignity and virtue.

Having ſeen that Chriſt is the only perſon in earth or heaven, worthy to open the divine purpoſe, and accompliſh the ſame, let us ſee wherein ſovereign grace appears in the manifeſtation of God our Saviour.—God ſo loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, and this unſpeakable gift is the proper expreſſion of that love, with which God loved his people before the world began, for that love being infinite, the full expreſſion of it could not have been declared, but by a gift of infinite worth, ſo that unleſs Jeſus were an infinite perſon, the gift would not have been expreſſive of the abundant grace; but the gift of Chriſt is equal to the Father's ſuperlative love: yet how great the grace and the expreſſion of it are, no finite being can tell: we can only ſay, God *ſo* loved the world! &c. and herein is love! yet ſince it is *ſo* manifeſted, as that we may, in part, perceive it, let us take a view thereof, in the mirror of truth. Jehovah gave his Son, his only Son, his well-beloved Son—gave him for a covenant to a people deſerving his wrath—gave him up to the ſword of juſtice in their place—and, what is moſt aſtoniſhing, himſelf commanded that ſword to delay no longer, but awake and ſtrike the awful blow! yea, it even pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him and put him to grief! Whether the divine ſovereignty, juſtice, or grace, ſhone moſt glorious in this awful tranſaction, who can tell? Conſider further, that the perſons on whom this infinite bleſſing was beſtowed, were enemies to God

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by wicked works—rebels againſt the divine Majeſty, —perſons who had wickedly trampled upon his authority—at awful enmity in their hearts againſt his government—univerſally defiled with ſin, and of conſequence infinitely odious to divine purity— *a maſs of uncleanneſs*. What ſhall we ſay to theſe things? Was God under any obligation to manifeſt ſuch abundant kindneſs? Far otherwiſe: his law, which man had broken, was holy, ſo that the wiſdom, holineſs, faithfulneſs, and honor of God, yea, all his adorable prefections, ſtood engaged to puniſh the tranſgreſſor with deſtruction. Nothing therefore but pure ſovereignty and free grace could be the moving cauſe of ſuch compaſſion. This Paul had an eye to when he ſaid, *But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even while we were dead in ſins*, &c. How infinitely above the utmoſt extent of what is called mercy among men, does the divine good pleaſure riſe!---Again, as the riches of grace appear in the Father's unſpeakable gift, and conſidering the objects upon whom its favours are conferred, ſo alſo in the aſtoniſhing humiliation of the Son of God. *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that though he was rich, yet for your ſakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himſelf of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men, and being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs*. Unparalleled condeſcenſion this! That *he* who inhabited the praiſes of eternity—*he* who ſpake, and the univerſe roſe into being—*he* who fills the ſun with light, preſerves the courſe of nature, ſtretches out his hand, and fills all living with food—*he* who appeared in tremendous

tremendous glory at Sinai, and ſhall ſhortly aſcend his great white throne to judgment—that *he* ſhould become an infant of days—be brought forth in a ſtabe and laid in a manger, where oxen fed—ſhould take the form of a ſervant—ſuffer hunger, thirſt, and fatigue—be without a place to lay his head—and ſubject himſelf to cruel mockings, buffetings, and ſhameful ſpitting, and, to complete the ſtrange ſcene, voluntarily yield up himſelf to his enemies—deny himſelf of his father's ſmiles, which he valued more than life—make his ſoul a ſacrifice for ſin, and expire under the wrath of a ſin-avenging God!—*What things are theſe!* Does any thing but mere good pleaſure, grace altogether liberal and unmerited appear throughout the whole?

Let us now conſider the character that Jeſus ſuſtained in his ſtate of humiliation, and the benefits reſulting to his people from his work.—The important office which the Son of God ſuſtained was that of a SURETY, Heb. vii. 22. In order to this he was made under the law, and ſet by the Sovereign of Heaven in the law room and place of his people; to fulfill all righteouſneſs in their behalf, and to ſatisfy juſtice in its utmoſt demands for their tranſgreſſions, *that God might be juſt, and yet the juſtifier of him that believeth in Jeſus.* The prophet Daniel very accurately ſtates the ſurety's work in the following words, *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, to finiſh the tranſgreſſion, and to make an end of ſins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs.* That our ſins were imputed to the ſurety; that Jeſus was ſubſtituted to be the ſin-bearing and ſin-atoning lamb, appears from ſuch declarations as follow: *The Lord hath laid* ON HIM *the iniquity of* US ALL. HE *was made ſin* FOR US. *Himſelf bare* OUR SINS *in his own body on the tree.*

Through the eternal ſpirit he offered himſelf without ſpot unto God, and thereby *put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf.* Thus *He poured out his ſoul unto death: and he was numbered with the tranſgreſſors, and he bare the ſins of* MANY, *and made interceſſion* FOR *the tranſgreſſors.* But though our divine ſubſtitute placed himſelf in the loweſt ſtate of human wretchedneſs, and expired under the wrath of God; though he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; yet the third day he roſe again, according to the ſcriptures; whereby it was fully demonſtrated, that the work which he had declared *finiſhed*, when he gave up the Ghoſt, was acceptable and well pleaſing to God, was all-ſufficient to deliver his people from death and the curſe,—that he, as our ſurety, was freed from thoſe ſins which had been charged upon him, having made full atonement for them,—being juſtified in the ſight of the holy law,—declared to be the Son of God with power, and, as the reward of his obedience and ſufferings, crowned with glory, as it is written, *Thou haſt made him moſt bleſſed for ever: thou haſt made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.*

It is generally allowed that Chriſt magnified the law and made it honorable, and ſo fulfilled all righteouſneſs; and it is as plain that his obedience to the law, was done in his people's room, or as their ſurety. If this be not true, it will be hard to find a tolerable gloſs to put upon that ſcripture which informs us, that *By the obedience of one many are made righteous.* But this momentous truth does not go a begging for its evidence, nor does it reſt ſimply upon one paſſage of holy writ, but is intermingled with the whole of Revelation. Paul, in deſcribing *The Righteouſneſs of Faith*, ſhows, that it is imputed for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth. *Chriſt is the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth*, Rom. x. 4.

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He was made ſin for us, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21, ſee alſo Rom. iii. 21—26, Chap. iv. 3—6, 22—25. Unleſs this be admitted, there can appear no propriety, beauty, nor glory in that admirable name, which the ſurety bears, and which is the glory of his church, viz. THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, Jer. xxiii. 6. And their claim would be void, who in the triumphs of faith, ſay, IN THE LORD HAVE I RIGHTEOUSNESS and ſtrength. If this ſacred truth was built upon no better foundation, than the higheſt witneſs of men, we might fear the wrath of men againſt it; but it reſts upon a baſis infinitely more ſecure, than even earth's foundations; for *Their righteouſneſs is of me*, SAITH THE LORD.

Thus we have ſeen that the incarnation, obedience, ſufferings, death and reſurrection of Chriſt, and the glory that followed, together with the declared end thereof, is the eternal purpoſe of grace unfolded, *even the myſtery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifeſt to his ſaints.* Many of the works of men are beautiful; all the divine works are glorious; but the Saviour's works of obedience and ſuffering, exceed in glory. Here the ETERNAL ceaſes, as it were, to be inviſible: the veil is rent, and the moſt holy place thrown wide open; for in the croſs of Chriſt the brighteſt exhibition is made of every divine perfection; the ſovereignty and riches of divine mercy and grace—the glory of the divine Juſtice, or the infinite oppoſition of the Deity to ſin; in a word, infinite wiſdom, veracity, and power, with every other glorious attribute, unite in honouring the holy law, ſetting forth the evil of ſin, deſtroying the works of Satan, and completely ſaving the choſen of God.

SECTION IV.

THE WORD OF GRACE; OR, GRACE IN ITS PUBLICATION.

NOTHING can be more grand, and becoming the ſovereign of heaven, than that awful view of eternal power given us in the following words: LET THERE BE LIGHT—AND THERE WAS LIGHT! Thus by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hoſts of them by the ſpirit of his mouth; for he ſpake and it was---he commanded, and it ſtood faſt. This *divine perſon*, who ſpoke all things into exiſtence, and who upholds all things by his power, is called THE WORD OF GOD, Rev. xix. 13, and in reference to the purpoſe of grace and its publication, he is called a PROPHET, Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19. The forerunner of this great prophet teſtifies, that *He whom God hath ſent, ſpeaketh the words of God*; and the faithful and true witneſs himſelf declares, *The words which ye hear of me are not mine, but the father's that ſent me*; *he gave me commandment what I ſhould ſpeak*. And addreſſing the Father he ſays, *I have given them* (his apoſtles) *the words which thou gaveſt me*. Now the ſcriptures of truth are the words of this great prophet; for though but a ſmall part of them were ſpoken by him, while he tabernacled upon earth; yet it was by his Spirit that holy men of old were inſpired to write, 1 Peter i. 11. 2 Peter i. 21. And the ſame bleſſed ſpirit was, after Chriſt's aſcenſion, made to reſt upon his apoſtles, under whoſe inſpiration they ſpake *none other things than Moſes and the prophets did ſay ſhould come*. The ſcriptures then being given

given by inſpiration of God, are a perfect record of his mind, and the only unerring guide to the knowledge of him the true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent. So that it is a vain thing to pretend to, or expect, any other knowledge of *Grace*, than what the word of truth publiſhes. Hence it is called *the Word of Grace—the Goſpel of Grace—the Truth*, &c. and all that are of the truth hear Chriſt's voice. Such will not be ſurprized to ſee theſe heavenly oracles perverted; it will not appear a ſtrange thing to them, to behold ſome turn the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs—others, with cunning craftineſs, lying in wait to deceive—others, changing the truth of God into a lie—and many, following their pernicious ways, by reaſon of whom the way of truth is evil ſpoken of; they rather receive hereby a notable confirmation of the truth of the ſcriptures, which foretold, that many would deny Chriſt, under a profeſſion of his name.

I ſhall here therefore give a brief view of ſome ſyſtems, out of many, which, while they pretend to have their foundations in the word of God, anſwer no other end, than to eclipſe and pervert the truth as it is in Jeſus; and ſo, to decoy and ruin precious ſouls: and then attempt to ſtate the true nature, glory, ſufficiency, and freeneſs, of the glorious goſpel of the grace of God.

It might be obſerved by the way, that the variety of doctrines, and the diverſity of ſentiments, prevailing in the profeſſing world, are by no means to be conſidered as ariſing from any different *end*, that their inventors and propagators have in view; but from the different *ways* in which they hope to attain the one common end. Nothing leſs than happineſs, even everlaſting happineſs, is the grand end propoſed; and every one is ready to think his own ſcheme the neareſt and moſt eligible way thereunto. Thoſe among pro-

feſſing Chriſtians, who have the higheſt reputation for virtue, benevolence, candor, and decorum, ſeek to obtain the favour of the Moſt High, by their own obedience; and it muſt be acknowledged, that this plan claims the preference of any modern ſcheme, which the wiſdom of man has framed; for ſuch have the aſſurance of the one law-giver for their ſecurity, that if they are found *perfectly good*, or in his ſight *do well*, they ſhall be rewarded. Man was at the firſt framed to live, and enjoy his Maker's favour in this way; nor is there any knowledge, that we have naturally, that can point out a better. We find many very earneſt in the purſuit of eternal life in this way, ſeeking righteouſneſs *as it were* by the deeds of the law; not that it ſhould be thought they have nothing to do with the goſpel; for, in general, that is eſteemed as the beſt directory to obey the law. Nor are we to imagine, that every notion of grace is excluded from this ſyſtem, for looking upon the progreſs of nature, as they imagine, under divine aſſiſtance, they can ſee great cauſe to ſay, *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are:* and though they do not come up to the full requirements of the law, even in their own ſenſe of it, yet they put their many acts of piety, charity, benevolence, heavenly-mindedneſs, &c. in the oppoſite ſcale, and, with pleaſing admiration, fancy they ſee the balance turn in their favour. And as to their ſhortcomings, occaſioned by human frailty, the ſtreaming ſorrows of the heart-bleeding penitent are thought ſufficient to waſh away the impurity thereof. Now, to animate the votaries of this way, the rewards of virtue in this preſent life, but more eſpecially in the life to come, are propoſed to their conſideration. "To be conſcious of that cloudleſs ſerenity within, which proceeds from paſſions ſubdued, under the ſuperior authority of reaſon and religion; to feaſt upon the *uninter-*

uninterrupted joys, which this vain world can neither give nor take away; to bleſs and be bleſſed; to love and be loved; to be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; to ſerve him whoſe ſervice is the glory of thoſe who ſit enthroned in heaven, and to have neither *hought* nor *wiſh*, which would not do us honor, if publiſhed before the univerſe—What ſenſe of *dignity*, what *ſelf-enjoyment*, muſt this conſciouſneſs yield! And if ſuch enjoyments are the rewards of virtue here, what, then, muſt be the undiſturbed fruition of that ſtate which the preſent weakneſs of the human underſtanding cannot adequately conceive of!" &c. Such is the doctrine, and ſuch the ſtimulation to virtue, among ſome who profeſs to derive their religion from the Bible. But what if it ſhould appear, from that very book, that every ſon and daughter of Adam is under a law, which requires *ſinleſs perfection*, on pain of eternal death—that the leaſt tranſgreſſion is infinitely heinous—and that no partial obedience, however ſincere, can recover the divine favour, when once loſt? and what if it ſhould appear, from the expreſs words of the great Lawgiver, that the whole world is guilty before him? Then ſurely it will follow, that this doctrine is corrupt, the hope founded upon it deluſive; —and that, while its votaries are pleaſing themſelves with the thoughts of being in the way to heaven, they are in fact going down to hell, with a lie in their right hand. And that this is the caſe, plainly appears from Gal. iii. 10. Luke x. 27. Mat. v. 22, 28; whence it is evident, that ſuch is the nature of that law, which every intelligent creature is under infinite obligations to obey, that it extends to the inmoſt thoughts of the heart, and condemns the riſing of anger, as *murder*, and the ſecret motions of uncleanneſs, as *adultery*. If it be denied by any, that every ſoul of man, is under obliga-

obligations to keep the whole law, let the following thoughts be impartially weighed. If all are not under the law naturally; then the rewards of obedience, and the threatenings of diſobedience could not be *univerſal.* But the whole world is become guilty before God; and ſo are liable to the threatened curſe. Rom. iii. 19. ch. ii. 8, 9. Gal. iii. 10; therefore all men are naturally under the law. And however it might ſhock the boaſted benevolence of ſome, to think of God deſtroying the ſoul and body of any of his creatures in hell; yet that book, from whence they profeſs to have gathered their creed, informs us, that the law, even as the miniſtration of death, is *glorious.* To urge that the remorſe of the tranſgreſſor, or any degree of penitence, would bind or influence Jehovah to pardon him, would be an unworthy reflection upon the holy law, and the equity of the divine government; and would involve nothing leſs than an inſinuation, that Chriſt died in vain, and that the doctrine of his croſs is *fooliſhneſs.* But ſo far is *remorſe* or *penitence* from averting the curſe, or procuring pardon, or the higheſt human virtue, from balancing the leaſt tranſgreſſion, that a ſingle grain of ſand would do more towards overbalancing the world. If ſin be an infinite evil (and conſiſtently to deny it we muſt give up the whole of revelation) then "the ſtreaming ſorrows of the heart-bleeding penitent," added to thouſands of ſacrificed rams, or ten thouſand rivers of oil, will be of no avail to atone for it. Now that ſin is an infinite evil, might be fairly demonſtrated from—the *object* againſt whom it is committed—the malignant ſtain of it, which, unleſs atoned for, will eternally remain—the loſs of an infinite portion in God being its demerits, and the eternal extent of that loſs. Unleſs therefore an atonement of infinite worth be found out; the wrath of God muſt abide on the ſoul that ſinneth; for this

this (however uncharitable it may appear in their view whom it affects) is the deciſion of that law, by which we are to judge ourſelves and to be judged.

But the above ſyſtem is found fault with and exploded by others, who yet maintain, "That though Paul ſays, where ſin hath abounded, grace hath alſo ſuperabounded; it does not therefore follow, that before one is by grace made acceptable, he may not thro' divine aſſiſtance prepare himſelf, by works morally good for the divine favour."--"I agree" ſays one, "with thoſe who aſcribe *a little* to free will, but *very much* to grace." Now, by the works hinted at here, we are to underſtand either ſincere obedience to the law, or fulfilling the conditions of faith and repentance, or elſe complying with the terms of peace, to which we are told the bleſſings of the goſpel belong, and which may be produced by nature, aſſiſted by common grace. If any fixed meaning can be given to this jargon, it is ſomething like the following, viz. that God will give all deſirable aſſiſtance to the well-diſpoſed; and if we do but what we can, or at leaſt make but one ſtep towards our reconciliation with him, he will give us his ſpirit to help us to proceed. The ſame ſentiment has been given us in various other forms of ſpeech, and by ſome, with a great ſhow of ſound doctrine; we have been told, that "whoſoever ſincerely endeavours to pleaſe God, may reſt perfectly aſſured, that God has no diſpleaſure againſt him; for the righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs." At other times the word of encouragement is given to the weak and feeble, though well-diſpoſed, in this form, "In the uſual methods of grace, evil habits are maſtered by degrees ---and it is a great while before the contrary habits of grace and virtue are grown up to any conſiderable degree of ſtrength, and man comes to a confirmed ſtate of goodneſs---but yet this ought not to diſcou-

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rage us; for ſo ſoon as WE have ſeriouſly begun this change, we are in a good way, and all our endeavours will have the acceptance of good beginnings, and God will be ready to help us; and if we purſue our advantage, we ſhall every day gain ground, and the work will grow eaſier upon our hand." When our firſt beginnings to be better take the notion of ſincere repentance, then we have the following inſtructions: "If you hate your former ways, which were not good, and ſincerely repent of them, and with mourning hearts, and weeping eyes approach to God, for the pardon of ſin; as that law, which is the unchanging ſtandard of right, requires man ſhould forgive his enemies, upon their repenting and aſking pardon; much more will the divine author of that law. To the *humble penitent* every encouragement is given." But when the beginning of any good in us, is termed *acting faith upon Chriſt*, then the addreſs runs thus: "If ever the ſpirit of God graciouſly influence your ſouls, ye will become thoroughly ſenſible of your abſolute inability" (here follows the proof of this) "and yet enter upon a vigorous uſe of means. Ye will do for yourſelves as if ye were to do *all*; and yet overlook all ye do" (which by the way will be the greateſt part of the work) "as if ye had done *nothing*. Will ye do *nothing* for yourſelves, becauſe ye cannot do *all?* Lay down no ſuch impious concluſions againſt your own ſoul. Do what you *can*, and it may be, while ye are doing what ye *can* for yourſelves, God will do for you what ye *cannot*." And in order to remove every diſcouragement, from the thought that the natural man cannot pleaſe God, it is added, "Let us believe as we can, in obedience to God's command, and while we are doing ſo, although the act be at the beginning but NATURAL, yet in the very act, promiſed and purchaſed grace ſtrikes in, and turns it into a ſupernatural

pernatural act of believing." Thus, at length, it is found out how they that are in the fleſh might pleaſe God! This the apoſtle Paul had not attained to, Rom. viii. 8. To the ſame amount is the following addreſs, "So ſoon as the ſinner was diſpoſed to accept, the Saviour was willing to beſtow, free and full redemption; and the very firſt ſigh that comes from an awakened heart, pierces the ears of our gracious God —the Pſalmiſt ſays, he ſent water into the wilderneſs to change its nature; that is, he ſent his grace into our hearts to change their nature, to ſhew them their dead and barren ſtate, to make them ſenſible of it, diſtreſſed under it, and then to cry to him for deliverence, and when his grace has thus far diſpoſed the heart aright, and it can pray for more grace; then will our Lord enrich it with abundant ſtreams; for he is always diſpoſed to give, in the meaſure we are diſpoſed to receive."

Theſe are but a few ſpecimens, out of many that might be collected, to ſhew the uſe men have made of the goſpel, in what ſenſe they underſtand it, and how they expect to be ſaved by it. But if it be indeed true, as moſt of the above ſyſtems would inſinuate, that man is a ruined creature, and ſo in a forlorn, helpleſs condition; it does not appear from either of theſe ſchemes, that there is any thing like *glad tidings of great joy*, to ſuch an one; for however much the better diſpoſed ſort of people may be encouraged thereby, they contain no hope or encouragement for the ſimply guilty; for nothing can be goſpel to ſuch, but that which preſents a ſufficient ground of hope to them, while, in the divine ſight, and in their own conſcience, they ſtand juſtly condemned, as tranſgreſſors of the law. This the goſpel of the grace of God does; and therefore every ſcheme of religion that teaches men to *do* any thing, or even to wait to have any thing done,

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to encourage their hope in God, is quite different in its nature and deſign, to the goſpel of Chriſt, and in fact encourages man's natural diſaffection to God, even while it leads him to fancy that he is at peace with him. The goſpel does not teach us to DO any thing for life, though it be varniſhed over with the moſt evangelical names, but to live by what is already *finiſhed*, 1 John, iv. 9.—It is, whether men perceive it or not, glad tidings of great joy to ALL people; and ſo muſt be free from what are called *the terms of the goſpel*; for however ſmall theſe *terms* are ſometimes ſaid to be, when they come to be explained, they ſhew that by far the greater part of the work of ſalvation, is left for the ſinner to perform. The goſpel is in fact nothing more than a report of the grace and truth that came by Jeſus Chriſt. There are various ſummaries given of it in the ſcriptures, ſuch as, "He was delivered for our offences, and raiſed again for our juſtification."—"The blood of Jeſus Chriſt, his Son, cleanſeth us from all ſin."—HE was made ſin for us who knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in Him."—"For when we were yet without ſtrength, in due time Chriſt died for the ungodly," and "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us:" yea, "Herein perceive we the love of God, becauſe he laid down his life for us," and "It is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners, even the chief among them;"—"Wherefore he is able to ſave them to the UTTERMOST that come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for them," ſo then it is "not by works of righteouſneſs, which we have done but according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, which he ſhed on us abundantly, through Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt, our Saviour; that being juſtified by his grace, we ſhould be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." "For now the righteouſneſs of God, without the law is manifeſted, being witneſſed by the law and the prophets, even the righteouſneſs of God, which is by faith of Jeſus Chriſt, *unto all and upon all them that believe*, for there is no difference; for all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God; being juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Chriſt Jeſus; whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God: to declare at this time his righteouſneſs, that he might be juſt, and the juſtifier of him who believeth in Jeſus." The word that conveys this bleſſed righteouſneſs "Is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach: that if thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thine heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs, and with the mouth confeſſion is made unto ſalvation; for the ſcripture ſaith, WHOSOEVER believeth on him ſhall not be aſhamed---ſo then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The glorious truths ſet forth in theſe words of ſcripture are, 1ſt, That the work of Chriſt finiſhed upon the croſs, does *in itſelf* contain every requiſite for the juſtification of thoſe who are ungodly and without ſtrength; ---that God appears juſt in juſtifying ſuch through the work of his Son:---and that therefore, the Redeemer's work is an all-ſufficient ground of preſent peace to the guilty conſcience, and of joy to the moſt diſconſolate ſoul, without taking in any other conſideration whatever. 2dly, That ſalvation, through

the finiſhed work of the divine ſurety, is beſtowed in the moſt ſovereign, free, and unconditional manner, on ſinners, without any diſtinction of character, nation, name, or degree; to ſinners, *as ſuch*, deſtitute of every qualification or recommendation whatever. Such are the perſons, and ſuch the deplorable circumſtances of thoſe, whom the goſpel is deſigned to relieve and ſave! 3dly, That this goſpel of the kingdom is brought near to the guilty, and that the faithfulneſs of God, in the free promiſe of life in Chriſt Jeſus to ſinners believing in him, is the *only* encouragement that the loſt and helpleſs have to hope in divine mercy; and that to hope through any other medium, is to fruſtrate the true grace of God.

Firſt: That Chriſt obeyed and ſuffered in the room of his people, has been before ſhown to be a ſcripture doctrine. We have ſeen that he placed himſelf in the loweſt ſtate of human wretchedneſs, even under the curſe of God: beneath the full weight of which he expired. Now had the Lord Jeſus been confined a priſoner by the bars of death; it would have been fully demonſtrated, that his work was not ſufficient to bring ſalvation, to perſons in the circumſtances under which he died, and therefore we are taught to look upon his *reſurrection*, as the grand central evidence of the ſufficiency of his work: of which fact the Lord therefore has been pleaſed to give ample evidence, both human and divine.—The old Teſtament foretold it—the new Teſtament confirms the glorious truth;---the Spirit, whom Chriſt promiſed, as the conſequence of his reſurrection and aſcenſion, teſtifies of it, in the miracles which the apoſtles wrought, and the happy effects which the goſpel had amongſt the nations of the earth; for though the gates of hell were ſet in oppoſition to it, the kings of the earth, and all human power united againſt it, and a fortreſs ſtill more invulnerable in the hearts

hearts of ſinners; yet ſuch was the almighty power attending it, that it bore down all oppoſition, and proved itſelf mighty to ſave. If to all this be added the teſtimony of them whoſe intereſt it was to conceal it, it muſt appear that no fact can be ſupported by ſtronger evidence; and the truth of the reſurrection of Chriſt being eſtabliſhed, the ſufficiency of his work to ſave the guilty, is confirmed. By his being placed under the law by ſovereign grace, that according to the eternal purpoſe men might be bleſſed in him; God, by whoſe act of ſovereignty he was appointed Mediator, in very faithfulneſs imputes his obedience and atonement to every one that believes, whereby they are made the righteouſneſs of God in him.

The belief of this truth is the firſt and only thing that gives peace to a guilty conſcience; for as the only reaſon God aſſigns, why any ſhould be delivered from going down to the pit is, *I have found a ranſom*; ſo this is the only reaſon of that *good hope* that comes through grace. When a guilty ſinner underſtands that it is the voice of God that addreſſes his conſcience, informing him that righteouſneſs is imputed without works; he believes, ceaſes from his own works, and enters into reſt by virtue of what he believes, concerning *Chriſt's being delivered for our offences, and raiſed again for our juſtification.*

Again: that good news which the goſpel brings is, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners, as ſuch. Unleſs this be true, the ſcriptures contain no tidings of great joy to *all people:* nay, unleſs this be an eſtabliſhed fact, there is no juſt ground upon which any of the human race can approach to God; nor can any ſoul receive the leaſt benefit by the work of Chriſt. Nature will teach us, and the law of Moſes will confirm it, that if we do well we ſhall be accepted. But this cannot be glad tidings to thoſe who are con-

ſcious of being the unhappy ſubjects of every evil inclination, and of having been to every good work reprobate. But happy for ſuch ſons and daughters of wretchedneſs, that the goſpel is a pure ſtream of *grace*, flowing out of the throne of God and the Lamb. Far from being clogged with thoſe manifold qualifications and prerequiſites, which the ſons of pride would make a kind of ſtepping-ſtone to the ſalvation of Jeſus; the heavenly publication of grace, does not lead poor ſinners to look for the beginning of ſomething for the better in themſelves, under any notion whatever, previous to faith on the Son of God; but teaches them, even while deſtitute of every ſign, work, or evidence, except what confirms their miſery, to hope in the *bleeding ſacrifice*. It reveals and eſtabliſhes an important, comfortable, precious, undeniable truth; and leads the moſt guilty to take their *firſt beginnings* of hope, peace, and comfort from *it alone*. Thus the genuine goſpel paſſes by, and totally diſregards all thoſe fine diſtinctions, which the pride of men prompts them to make, as ſo many cyphers; and in the moſt ſovereign manner beſtows the richeſt favours on the moſt unworthy among men. Every other ſcheme, but the goſpel, leads men, either directly or indirectly, to take the beginnings of their hope from their ſincere obedience, penitential tears, deep humiliations, watchfulneſs, earneſt deſires, holy breathings, repentances, faith, &c. If it be admitted that SOMETHING is requiſite to appear in the ſoul, that is favourable, and whereby we become, in ſome meaſure, different from the ungodly and profane; this fatal SOMETHING, whether we are aſpiring after it, waiting for it, or in the ſuppoſed poſſeſſion of it, is that awful inſtrument by which the God of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not, leſt the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt, ſhould ſhine into their

their hearts, and is a grand reaſon why the goſpel is fooliſhneſs to ſome, and a ſtumbling block to others; in ſhort, it is the true cauſe of all diſaffection to the goſpel.—The goſpel of the grace of God, making known the ſufficient righteouſneſs, and perfect atonement of Chriſt, as the ſovereign cure provided of God for ſinners, may very fitly (and with the ſtricteſt propriety) be called the ONE THING NEEDFUL. This in the word of faith is brought near to us, Rom. x. 6—10. is directed to the attention of ſinners of all ſorts; to ſuch as poſſeſs nothing but what is loathſome and diſguſtful; to perſons whoſe character is fitly ſet forth, Luke xiv. 21. The poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind; and ſhows that as mankind are in an equal ſtate of condemnation by nature, the moſt zealous devotee is as far off from God as the moſt profane. In fine, it conſiders the whole human race as having turned their backs on God; and ſo the word of faith is a voice behind them, calling them in the moſt benevolent language to return, at the ſame time preſenting a ſufficient encouragement thereto. *Hearken unto me, ye ſtout-hearted and far from righteouſneſs: I bring near my righteouſneſs; it ſhall not be far off, and my ſalvation ſhall not tarry—Hear, and your ſouls ſhall live—Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, ana ye ſhall be ſaved.*

It has pleaſed the Lord alſo to leave on record many PATTERNS of his grace, all of which import, that it is divinely ſovereign, unboundedly rich, and infinitely free. And we are moreover informed, that thoſe examples of Jehovah's long-ſuffering and mercy, were recorded to this end, *that in the ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding riches of his grace, through Chriſt Jeſus.* Thus it appears that the eternal purpoſe of grace, manifeſted by the appearance of God our Saviour, and publiſhed in the word of faith, is the only

encouragement that the wretched have to hope in Jehovah's mercy; ſo that hope, peace, or comfort taken from any ſource aſide from, or in conjunction with, the abundant grace, is deluſive, and muſt, in the end, make aſhamed.

I ſhall conclude this Section with the words of an author, who writes with becoming reverence for the true grace of God, and like one who has taſted its ſweetneſs, and knows its value. "The genuine goſpel will always appear an inſult on the taſte of the public. Wherever it comes, if it be not received, it awakens diſguſt and provokes abhorrence. Nor can it be otherwiſe. For its principal deſign is, to mortify the pride of man, and diſplay the glory of grace; to throw all human excellence down to the duſt, and to elevate, even to thrones of glory, the needy and wretched; to ſhow that thoſe things which are highly eſteemed among men are an abomination in the ſight of God, and that he who is deſpiſed of men, and abhorred by the nations, is Jehovah's eternal delight.—The ancient goſpel is an unceremonious thing. It pays no reſpect to the academic, becauſe of his profound learning; nor to the moraliſt, on account of his upright conduct. It has not the leaſt regard to the courtier, becauſe of his pompous honours; nor to the devotee, for the ſake of his zeal or his righteouſneſs. No: the potent prince and the abject ſlave; the wiſe philoſopher and the ignorant ruſtic; the virtuous lady and the infamous proſtitute, ſtand on the ſame level in its comprehenſive view.—Its buſineſs is only with the *worthleſs* and *miſerable*, whoever they be. If theſe be relieved, its end is gained. If theſe be made happy, its author is glorified, whatever may become of the reſt. Towards theſe it conſtantly wears the moſt friendly aſpect, and rejoices to do them good. But the ſelf-ſufficient of every rank, are treated by it with the

the utmoſt reſerve, and beheld with a ſteady contempt. —He (the convinced ſinner) wants to find himſelf ſome way *diſtinguiſhed*, as a proper object of mercy, by holy tempers and ſanctified affections. This is a bar to his comfort: this is his grand embarraſſment. In other words, he is ready to fear, that he is not *ſufficiently humbled* under a ſenſe of his ſins; that he has not thoſe *fervent breathings* after Chriſt and holineſs, which he ought to have, before he can be warranted to look for ſalvation with a well-grounded hope of ſucceſs.—But the ſpirit of truth ſhows that there is *no* good qualities to be obtained; *no* righteous acts to be performed—that we muſt come to Jeſus under that character by which he calls us. But it is evident, he calls us by the name of *ſinners*. As ſinners, therefore, *miſerable*, *ruined* ſinners, we muſt come to him for life and ſalvation—It was wrought for the *ſinner*; it was deſigned for the *ſinner*; and is beſtowed, freely beſtowed, on the *vileſt* of ſinners. It is not matter of bargain or the ſubject of ſale; it is not propoſed on I know not what *conditions*; as the performing ſome arduous courſe of duties, or the attaining ſome notable qualifications; but it is a *free gift*. Grace, as a ſovereign, is exalted to confer it; and grace, we know, deals only with the *unworthy*. As a gift it is imparted; as a gift, therefore, it muſt be received; and as for an abſolute free gift, the poſſeſſor of it ought to be thankful.—From theſe conſiderations we may with confidence affirm, that the *mere* ſinner, the *obnoxious* wretch; he who feels himſelf in a periſhing condition, and is conſcious that he deſerves no favour; has the ſtrongeſt encouragement given him to rely on it, as *ſufficient* for his juſtification and *free* for his uſe."†

SECTION

† See Booth's Reign of Grace, p. 3—9. 124—130. 416.

SECTION V.

THE NATURE, AND MANNER OF THE OPERATION, OF THE SPIRIT OF GRACE.

NOTHING is more generally miſtaken, though nothing more important to be known and well underſtood, than the nature and manner of the operation of the Spirit of grace. Many indeed have gone ſo far in profaneneſs, as to deny, flatly and openly to deny, that there are now afforded to mankind any divine and ſupernatural influences; and level the blackeſt charges againſt thoſe who maintain the importance and neceſſity of this heavenly doctrine. It muſt be acknowledged, that too much ground has been given for a denial of divine influences by thoſe enemies of the truth, who, profeſſing themſelves advocates for the doctrine, have run into the moſt profane enthuſiaſms, and the vileſt jargon. In this Section, therefore, an attempt will be made to point out the abſurdity of the former, to expoſe the enthuſiaſm and profaneneſs of the latter, and to ſet forth the ſcripture account of this important doctrine.

We have nothing to do here with thoſe men of *wit* who not only ſneer at the work of the Holy Spirit, but alſo diſregard every thing that wears the ſtamp of holineſs: we rather addreſs ourſelves to thoſe who, while they profeſs an uncommon attachment to the ſcriptures, and the one way of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt, in fact, rank themſelves among thoſe who have a form of godlineſs, but deny the power thereof. Thoſe who preſuming they can produce a few paſſages of ſcripture (without regard to their connection) to ſhow that the terms *word* and *ſpirit* are ſynonymous, fancy they have made a vaſt improvement in the ſcheme of Chriſtianity; and ſo, with contemptuous ſneer, pour ridicule

ridicule upon all who acknowledge the divine ſovereignty, and maintain the indiſpenſible neceſſity of the operation of the Spirit of grace, to give a true underſtanding of the word.

Their notion upon this ſubject is, that the word itſelf is a divine power, granted for us to believe by: and that there is no ſupernatural agency neceſſary to go forth in the word, either for our inſtruction, edification, conſolation, or eſtabliſhment; but it is *our adhering* to the written word. When perſons of this ſentiment condeſcend to explain themſelves, we find that they look upon the ſcripture as one would a common hiſtory, and maintain that all who underſtand the uſe of words, may attain to the true knowledge of the bible; and that it is as fooliſh to talk of the neceſſity of the ſupernatural agency of the divine Spirit, to lead us into the truth, as to talk of waiting for his inſtruction when reading the hiſtory of England. Upon this plan it would ſeem that the more wiſe and learned they are, and the moſt ſkilful in the knowledge of words, they ſtand the faireſt chance to enter into life, contrary to that authority which informs us, that *Not many wiſe men after the fleſh are called, but God hath choſen the fooliſh things of the world, to confound the wiſe; for it is written I will deſtroy the wiſdom of the wiſe, &c.* 1 Cor. i, 19, &c. —If it be aſked, why one receives the word and not another? Why do the moſt illiterate receive it, while the wiſe and learned, in the ſame aſſembly, manifeſt the moſt awful enmity againſt it? It is replied, becauſe the one mix the word with faith, while the other do not. If the queſtion again be moved, how does one come to mix the word with faith, and not another? Then we are told, becauſe he perceives beauty and ſuitableneſs in it; which in fact only tends to provoke a repetition of the queſtion, which when made

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If any one is made wiſe unto ſalvation, it muſt be either by the creature, willing and running, or elſe through the Lord ſhowing mercy. But the ſcripture ſaith it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth,

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Again: our Lord, when ſpeaking of the Spirit, ſays, *He ſhall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatſoever I have ſaid unto you.* Here is a plain diſtinction between the *words* which Chriſt ſpoke, and the *ſpirit* by whom the diſciples were guided into the truth of thoſe words. It is plain, therefore, that no one underſtands the truth, but by *his* teaching; or believes it, but by *his* perſuaſion; or obeys it, but through *his* influence and power. I ſuppoſe it is cuſtomary, upon ſome occaſions, for this claſs of profeſſors to *pray*; though I cannot ſee what propriety there is in their doing ſo, at any time or upon any occaſion, while they retain this notion: for if we do not believe that divine influences are eſſentially neceſſary to give the word ſucceſs, why ſhould we pray to the Father of mercies to edify, ſanctify, and comfort us in reading or hearing the word? Is not this drawing near with the lips, while the heart is far from God? And muſt not ſuch prayers be an abomination in the ſight of the Lord? And can any holding

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But on the other hand it is readily admitted, that the doctrine of the operation of the Spirit of truth has been much abuſed and traduced by men who have not the Spirit; who teach that his operations are wrought by *mere energy*, making impreſſions upon the mind without the word of grace: yea, ſome have aſcribed to his agency, the moſt crude, ludicrous, and even diabolical whims and fancies; all of which muſt alſo be an abomination in the ſight of the Lord; and if the holy anointing oil (which was a type of the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit) was forbidden to be counterfeited, on pain of being cut off from the people, Exod. xxx. 31—33, ſurely nothing can be more heinouſly wicked, nothing more pernicious to men, than counterfeiting the operation of the Holy Spirit, or impoſing the deluſions of the ſpirit of darkneſs upon men, under the ſanction of God's work. Yet what is more common among profeſſors of religion, than to call every rapturous humor of the mind, every impulſe of the imagination, and every falſe fire of the paſſions, the work and operation of the Spirit of God? And if any one, out of zeal for God, and love to their ſouls, faithfully expoſe the deluſion, and affectionately warn them to avoid the fatal ſnare, he will be thought an enemy to their peace, and be branded as an oppoſer of the work of the Spirit.

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It is ſtill thought by ſome, that miracles, or ſomething like them, are included in the work of the Spirit, even as in the Apoſtles' days. Such would do well to conſider, that thoſe things, which, through the power of the Spirit, were wrought by the Apoſtles, were intended as confirmations of the truth which they preached; but when the whole mind and will of God to his church was completed, their end was anſwered, and their uſe ceaſed; for if they had been continued after revelation was declared to be completed, it would have been an argument againſt that declaration. Whoever therefore pretends to them, or

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is waiting for them, errs, not knowing the ſcriptures.

Again: it is generally thought that his ſaving work conſiſts in diſpoſing the mind to ſerioufneſs, reſtraining evil practices, and in working good diſpoſitions and heavenly tempers, as they are called. But a perſon may have much ſerioufneſs about him, be very decent in his carriage among men, have a number of what he may think good and heavenly diſpoſitions, and yet all this be nothing more than the effects of that principle, common to mankind, which teaches poor ſinners to fancy themſelves better than others, and that they are approaching very near in likeneſs to God, and ſo leads them to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs. Whatever teaches a poor ſinner to do this, is not of God, but is that ſpirit which now worketh in the children of diſobedience.

Further: it is thought that terrors of conſcience, fearful apprehenſions of God, and deſpair in the ſoul, proceed from the operation of the Spirit of truth. But this ariſes from a miſtaken notion, and wrong application of what Chriſt ſays, John xvi. 8, *He ſhall convince the world of ſin*, &c. He explains himſelf v. 9, (to take up his words, and put a conſtruction of our own upon them, therefore, when the great Prophet condeſcends to explain, is, to ſay the beſt of it, very diſingenuous indeed!) He informs us, that his Spirit would act as *the Comforter* in this operation, v. 7, by ſhowing the world their ſin in not believing in him; which could not poſſibly be done, without giving them an underſtanding to know him that is true; and the knowledge of him would keep them from tormenting deſpair on the one hand, and from ſelf-righteous confidence on the other. But many things which are not ſins, becauſe not a breach of any divine law, are ſometimes attributed to the work of the Spirit; ſuch as the remorſe which ſeizes the conſcience of the

Papiſt for eating fleſh on a faſt-day, or a conſciouſneſs of guilt tormenting the mind of a Proteſtant Diſſenter, as the conſequence of having broken one or other of the laws of his particular church-covenant, &c. and this concern of mind can readily be removed without the atoning blood of Chriſt. It will be inquired, perhaps, how people come to be convinced of ſin? And the ſcripture teaches us to reply, that convictions of ſin, followed with torment and tending to deſpair, ariſe from the natural conſcience, and the holy law; Rom. ii. 14, 15, ch. iii. 20; the one revives and enforces the genuine dictates of the other, and conviction, ariſing from this quarter, will not ſuffer a perſon to think himſelf in a fair way of deliverance from the threatened wrath; any more than a felon's being apprehended would be to him a hopeful ſign of his being acquitted. Neither will this kind of conviction prevailing in the mind ſuffer the leaſt attempt to deliver himſelf out of the hands of his offended Sovereign; but will rather ſhow him, that nothing but death and deſtruction are his juſt portion. Nor will he (I mean, while natural conſcience is permitted to ſpeak its genuine language) imagine that God will aſſiſt him to make his eſcape. But, as it hath been already hinted, many terrors may poſſeſs the mind, where the perſon has never been convinced of the evil of ſin; ſuch as frightful views of hell, impreſſions upon the imagination that the flames of hell are kindling about him, &c. by which he might be drove into actual deſpair, as thinking he is reprobated—that his day of grace is paſſed, or that he has committed the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. For perſons to be encouraged therefore to extract any degree of hope, peace, or encouragement from convictions, is but drawing off their hope from a profane to a ſelf-righteous foundation; is only changing from an obvious deluſion, to a more

a more ſubtle and ſecret one, which makes their ſituation the more dangerous.

And as the *nature* of the Spirit's work has been groſsly miſtaken; ſo alſo has the *manner* of it been ſadly miſunderſtood. It has been generally thought that his manner of working is by ſome ſecret whiſper, impreſſion, or operation, *without the written word*; whereby ſinners are taught to believe, that a work of grace is begun in them, and from which they are inſtructed to conclude, that they are the dear children of God. But without tranſgreſſing the bounds of ſcripture charity, it may be obſerved, that whatever ſpirit impreſſes, influences, or comforts a ſinner, by any thing aſide from what is written in the word of God, is fitly denominated, and juſtly characterized, by the following epithets;—*the ſpirit of the world—the ſpirit of diſobedience—the ſpirit of error—the ſpirit of anti-chriſt—the ſpirit of ſlumber*, &c. The direct tendency of whoſe teachings are, to promote that work of ſelf-dependance which he began in our firſt parents; and one juſtly obſerves on this head, that "This *ſelf-dependance* may be ranked among the *moſt dangerous* of the infernal politics, becauſe the fatal poiſon lies *deep*, and is too often undiſcerned."

I ſhall now proceed to give ſome account of the Spirit of grace and his work, by which alone we know the things which are freely given us of God. The ſpirit of whom we now ſpeak, is diſtinguiſhed from every other, under the titles of the *holy ſpirit—the ſpirit of God—the ſpirit of truth—the good ſpirit—the ſpirit of judgment—the ſpirit of knowledge—the ſpirit of wiſdom—the ſpirit of faith—the ſpirit of grace*—and *the ſpirit of glory*. Theſe ſacred epithets plainly ſet forth the nature of his work; and that we may ſpeak of it with all becoming reverence, let us remember, that *the ſpirit is* GOD; which ſhould cauſe

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us to tremble, leſt we aſcribe any work to him, unworthy of his wiſdom, juſtice, holineſs, or truth. The work of this ſacred agent is to teſtify of Chriſt—to glorify him—to lead into truth, and to comfort the diſciples of Jeſus. But our ſafeſt way of proceeding, will be to hear the faithful and true witneſs ſpeak upon the ſubject, John xvi. 13—15, *When he, the ſpirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he ſhall not ſpeak of himſelf; but whatſoever he ſhall hear, that ſhall he ſpeak—he ſhall glorify me: for he ſhall take of mine, and ſhow it unto you. All that the father hath are mine, therefore, ſaid I, that he ſhall take of mine, and ſhow it unto you.* From hence we learn, that the ſole work of the promiſed Spirit is to glorify Chriſt, by teſtifying of him: and leſt we ſhould fancy, that the Father would be diſhonoured thereby, we are informed, that all things that the Father hath are Chriſt's; even every divine excellency, perfection and glory. Moſes and the Prophets, who wrote under the influence, and by the direction, of the Spirit of grace, had Chriſt for their theme. Many ſubordinate ſubjects, it is true, were introduced by them, to illuſtrate and confirm this one grand deſign; but to teſtify of Jeſus in his perſon and ſufferings, and to ſpeak of the glory that ſhould follow, was their primary deſign in writing, 1 Peter i. 11. Rev. xix. 10. Acts x. 43. And as it was the prophets delightful employ, to teſtify of Chriſt through the Spirit; ſo alſo was it the one grand theme of the apoſtles of our Lord, on whom this Spirit in his rich effuſions reſted. Paul, in giving a ſummary of the doctrine which himſelf and fellow apoſtles advanced, ſays, *we preach Chriſt crucified.* Hence it is plain, that the whole Bible is a teſtimony of Jeſus; even as himſelf ſaith, *ſearch the ſcriptures—for they teſtify of* ME. The *Spirit of grace*, therefore, through the whole

whole of his work, of enlightening, quickening, edifying, and comforting ſinners; ſpeaks not of any thing diſtinct from, much leſs oppoſed to, the glory and compaſſion of Jeſus. He ſhall not ſpeak of *himſelf*; but whatſoever he ſhall hear, that ſhall he ſpeak*. If then the Spirit of truth does not ſpeak of *himſelf*, it cannot be ſuppoſed that he will lead any whom he inſtructs to ſpeak of any work of his ſeparate from Chriſt, who is the alone ſubject of his teſtimony. Whatever influence, then, men are led by, to talk of a work of grace, that is not wrought by the Spirit's teſtimony of the things of Chriſt, we may with certainty conclude, that it is not of God. Much leſs then can we ſuppoſe, that this glorious agent leads any to ſpeak great things of *themſelves*: of their own ſuppoſed efforts, pious exertions, humble breathings, holy ſtrivings, &c. and to call them *his* regenerating influences. Far otherwiſe; his work ſtains the pride of man, by laying his fancied honour in the duſt; and preſenting a ſource of glorying in the Lord alone. But this doctrine deſerves a more particular illuſtration. Firſt: as the employment of the bleſſed Spirit is to lead into TRUTH, even the whole truth *as it is in Jeſus*, of conſequence he has no hand in teaching any thing inconſiſtent with, or unworthy of, the truth. He ſpeaks and communicates only the things of Chriſt, and of the Father whom Chriſt reveals; which things are *written*: there can, therefore, be no divine operation, but what is wrought by the concurring

* What the author here ſays is exceedingly juſt, and it is noticed only to prevent improper cavils, that when it is ſaid the Spirit *ſhall not ſpeak of himſelf*, it means that he ſhall not ſpeak *uncommiſſioned*, for it is immediately added, but *whatſoever he ſhall hear, that ſhall he ſpeak*.

This however comes to the ſame thing that the author pleads for. It is *Chriſt* he is commiſſioned to ſpeak of. He is the Spirit of the truth, guides into all truth and ſhews Chriſt's glorious grace to the guilty.—Ed.

curring influence of the *word* and *ſpirit* of truth. Is it the Spirit's work to regenerate the ſoul? We are alſo ſaid to be begotten by *the word of truth*, and *through the goſpel*. Are his regenerating influences compared to the old creation? It was by the *word of the Lord* that the heavens were made. He *ſpake* and it was done; he *commanded*, and it ſtood faſt. Is his work compared to the reſurrection? That will take place by the dead hearing Chriſt's voice, John v. 24, 25. In one word, the beginning, and his future operations upon the ſouls of his diſciples, in nouriſhing, comforting, eſtabliſhing, and ſanctifying them, are performed by the *word of grace*. It is by the *babes* partaking of the *ſincere milk of the word, that they grow* into a more advanced ſtate in Chriſt; and it was only by being nouriſhed up in the *words of faith*, and of good doctrine that Timothy could be fitted for the work of the miniſtry. And as the work of ſanctification is carried on in the ſoul, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, ſo our Lord informs us, that it is *the truth*, even the *word of truth*, that ſanctifies, John xvii. 17, and ye are clean *through the word* which I have ſpoken unto you, ſee alſo Eph. v. 25, 26. To what has been obſerved it may be added, that the Spirit of grace never leads any to miſapply the word; never comforts by the word in any other way, than by giving a true underſtanding of it, and applying the true ſenſe of the paſſage to the ſoul. He does not ſpeak a jot more than is contained in the written word; or lead to perceive any thing in one part of ſcripture, that is contrary to, or inconſiſtent with, the general ſcope of revelation.—Here I ſhall take the liberty to introduce the ſentiment of *Calvin* upon this doctrine; that they who call themſelves by his name, and yet plead for a work of the Spirit ſeparate from the word, may ſee how improperly they bear

bear the name of *Calviniſts*. He enquires of thoſe who hold the ſpirit's operation without the word, "Whether they have taſted of any other Spirit than that which the Lord promiſed to his diſciples?—But what manner of ſpirit did he ſpeak of in the promiſe? Even that Spirit which ſhould not ſpeak of *himſelf*, but ſhould miniſter, and inſpire into their minds, thoſe things which he, the Lord himſelf, had taught *by his word*.—It is not, therefore, the office of the Spirit which is promiſed to us, to feign new and unheard-of revelations, or to coin a new doctrine, whereby we ſhould be led from the received doctrine of the goſpel; but to ſeal in our minds *the ſelf-ſame* doctrine that is commended to us *by the goſpel*.—If any ſpirit, leaving the wiſdom of the *word of God*, doth thruſt unto us another doctrine, that ſame ſpirit ought rightfully to be ſuſpected of vanity and lying. But leſt under his (the Spirit of God's) name, the ſpirit of Satan ſhould creep in, he will have us to know him by that image of himſelf, which he hath *printed in the ſcripture*.—The Holy Ghoſt doth ſo ſtick faſt in his truth, which he hath expreſſed in the ſcripture, that *then only* he putteth forth and diſplays his force, when the ſcripture has its due reverence and dignity.—The faithful know none other ſpirit, but that which dwelt and ſpake in the apoſtles, by whoſe oracles we are continually called to the hearing of the word." Calvin's Inſtitu. B. 1. Chap. 9.

Having thus briefly noticed the *manner* of the divine Spirit's operations, let us now attend a little to the *nature* of them. In general it may be obſerved, that when any one is inſtructed by him, he learns ſome precious truth of the word, which previouſly he was ignorant of—or ſome truth which he had been before taught, is ſeaſonably revived in his mind, and his ſoul confirmed in the true underſtanding thereof; of which,

which, comfort, direction, or ſupport, will be the conſequence. But more particularly, his work is to convince of unbelief—to reconcile thoſe who are at enmity againſt the truth, to it—and to further enlighten, quicken, comfort, and confirm, the ſouls of the diſciples.

To faſten a conviction of UNBELIEF, even in the hearts of the wiſe, the learned, the devout, &c. as well as the profane, is the peculiar work of God, the ſovereign of the conſcience; it is what no man can do for himſelf, or work in another. This will plainly appear if we advert to the days when what our Lord ſays of the Spirit was eminently confirmed. The apoſtles went forth, not in the wiſdom of the ſcribes, or the diſputers of this world, or with the charms of human eloquence; but preaching Jeſus and the reſurrection, declaring the teſtimony that God had given of his Son, that he was well pleaſed in him. By this teſtimony they commended themſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God, declaring with all boldneſs, *He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.* And though the gates of hell were moved againſt their teſtimony—though the god of this world exerted every artifice to blind the minds of men, and pervert the truth—though the lords of the gentiles, and the tyrants of the earth oppoſed it—though the men, who were in the higheſt repute for philoſophy and univerſal literature, and were believed to be the moſt pious and devout upon the face of the earth, did all they could to prevent the name of Jeſus from being mentioned; yet the Spirit of truth bore down, with irreſiſtible evidence, the prejudices which men of all ranks had imbibed—convinced them that the whole world was guilty and in unbelief—emboldened many to receive the teſtimony,

openly

openly to confeſs ſalvation and eternal life through it, and made them willing to ſuffer the loſs of all things for it, yea, encouraged them rather to give up their lives, than let go the truth. But ſtill it will be inquired, *How* does the Spirit convince of unbelief? In reply to which I would inquire, how do we come to know that we have been in error, about things in general which we have heard, and either denied to be true, or received under ſome miſtaken notion, but by receiving a true underſtanding of the matter? Even ſo it is in the queſtion under conſideration. Man, previous to divine teaching, either wholly rejects the teſtimony of God, or receives it in a natural, carnal ſenſe. But when the Spirit of grace enlightens the underſtanding, to know the truth as it is in Jeſus; when he ſets before any one the true grace of God, and gives him to behold the authority of God in his word, the ſoul readily diſcovers its former error; perceives its dangerous ſituation while in a ſtate of ignorance; forſakes its former oppoſitions to the truth, or falſe notions about it; is aſhamed of its evil ways, repents of them, and turns unto the Lord. The Spirit, therefore, convinces of unbelief, in giving an underſtanding to know him that is true.

Again: his work conſiſts in reconciling enemies to God. It is a maxim that has not yet been refuted, that *the determination of the will, muſt evermore follow the illumination, conviction, and notice of the underſtanding.* Without ſtaying to illuſtrate this at large, it may be obſerved, that ſcripture and matter of fact clearly ſhow, that, when a ſinner beholds the beauty and excellency of God in Chriſt, as diſplayed in the goſpel, he immediately chooſes that moſt lovely manifeſtation of the true God as his *chief good.* It is contrary to ſcripture to maintain, that the Holy Spirit, in his operation upon the minds of men, ex-

erts any power that does the leaſt injury to the higheſt, the moſt rational ſenſe of human liberty, which conſiſts in chuſing what we like beſt; and yet every part of his work is founded in pure ſovereignty, directed by infinite wiſdom, juſtice, mercy, and faithfulneſs. This bleſſed agent does not drag the ſinner unwillingly, or againſt his will; but by bringing near to his view, the infinite lovelineſs of Jeſus, and the preciouſneſs, freeneſs, and glory of the goſpel; and thus by filling the underſtanding with the light of truth, the man's will becomes effectually determined. The ſoul finds the charms of Chriſt ſo irreſiſtibly ſtrong, that every power thereof is drawn out after him; ſo that now, ſhould any other object propoſe itſelf as the *ſupreme good*; the happy ſinner would, without heſitation, ſay, *God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* He is now reconciled to the one way of ſalvation by free grace and ſovereign mercy. It appears, therefore, that the eſſential difference between a real work of the Spirit of God, and every counterfeit thereof, is this, that to the one it is given to *know* the myſteries of the kingdom of heaven; he has heard the word of God and *underſtood* it; while the natural man, whatever notions he has obtained of the goſpel, *knoweth not* the things of the Spirit of God, &c. It may be added, that when a ſinner is reconciled to God by the Spirit, he will not be led thereby, to talk of a certain previous round of feelings which he has had, or ſerious acts which he has exerted; but will frankly confeſs, that all his ſtrivings, and earneſt and laborious exertions, in ſeeking, faſting, praying, reſolving, &c. before he knew the truth in which he now rejoices, only tended to ſear his conſcience, and draw off his attention from the hope of the goſpel; ſo that in all, he was doing that abominable thing that God hated;—that now his only refuge is divine

grace

upon Peter's hearers, when three thouſand were converted, and that it had no ſucceſs, at Chorazin and Bethſaida, when Chriſt himſelf preached, is not to be attributed to any different energy upon the mind of one more than the other; but rather to the different *principles* of thoſe to whom it came—the word is attended with *the ſame power* and efficacy, ſimply conſidered in itſelf, in all places, and at all times: the difference, and reaſon of its ſucceſs is, one is *principled*, and the other is not; and therefore, had all had the ſame principles, all would have received it alike." *

I ſhall not ſtay here to remark upon this ſentence, which it is obvious is contrary to the true grace of God, and virtually, with the Arminians, oppoſes the work of the Spirit; but proceed to conſider the principles upon which this notion is founded. And we are told, that "Man being dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, void of the leaſt degree of ſpiritual life, he muſt neceſſarily be *paſſive* in the work of regeneration, FOR DEAD MATTER CANNOT ACT. But whereever the word of grace is received to any good purpoſe, it always ſuppoſes the mind to be active in the entrance thereof. Therefore, ſound reaſon teaches us to conclude, that there muſt of neceſſity be a principle of life exiſting in the ſoul, before it can hear, underſtand, and receive the word, and ſo cannot be the grace of the goſpel implanted: nor can the word be

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be the inſtrument of implanting it; unleſs we can conceive, with any degree of rationality, of one ſeeing without eyes, hearing without ears, receiving without action, or believing the word of God without faith." Here we are preſented with an argument, blended with ſcripture and ſome ſort of metaphyſical philoſophy, which the apoſtles were cautious to keep ſeparate, leſt the croſs of Chriſt ſhould be made of none effect: for to entertain precious ſouls with philoſophical ſpeculation, about the *activity* and *paſſivity* of the mind in receiving the truth, tends to lead them from *that* which alone can give peace to the conſcience, purity in the ſoul, and holineſs in the life.

That man is dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, is an awful fact, admitted and much lamented—that he muſt therefore be neceſſarily paſſive in regeneration is freely granted—and that "dead matter cannot act," is alſo readily acknowledged. But ſurely that ſyſtem of philoſophy that would teach us to compare "dead matter" to a SPIRIT that cannot but think and be conſcious, ought not to be reputed ſound. It is plain that man *can* be regenerated, he has faculties in which the principles of regeneration *can* be wrought; but *dead matter* cannot, in the ſame ſenſe, be regenerated; and ſo then the parallel is altogether impertinent to the ſubject. And if a poſſibility of being regenerated is intended, by having the principles of faith, &c. it is granted, and when we think of God, and behold his works, we muſt ſay, is any thing too hard for him? But we have inſtances recorded in the ſcripture of the power of the *divine word* to animate and vivify even "dead matter." "And God ſaid let the EARTH bring forth living creatures," &c. And of the truth of this we have full evidence at the grave of him who had been dead four days, John xi. 39—44. Here we behold that *dead matter* was forcibly

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and effectually worked upon and quickened by the *living word* of Jeſus. But, diſmiſſing any further remarks about dead matter, let us turn our attention to a *living ſpirit*.

The minor propoſition we will beg leave to deny, which may be done without falling into the abſurdity and irrationality of ſaying a perſon may ſee without eyes, hear without ears, &c. and if this can conſiſtently be done, then not only the concluſion muſt fall to the ground, but moſt of the arguments for this doctrine being built upon kindred premiſes, will be weakened, if not overturned. The whole argument goes upon the ſuppoſition, that in hearing, underſtanding, and receiving a report or teſtimony, the mind muſt neceſſarily and invariably be, not only *active*, but alſo *well diſpoſed* to the tidings which it conveys: which ſeems as though ſome fatal neceſſity forced us to love and delight in a thing before we have either heard or underſtood any thing about it! It is granted, that the mind frequently, though not neceſſarily and invariably, is active in receiving a report; and alſo, that what it is well diſpoſed to, it frequently ſeeks to hear of, in order to receive. But very often we receive reports not only without having a good diſpoſition towards them; but we have been forced to admit them through unqueſtionable conviction of their reality and truth, even tho' the inclination would wiſh to oppoſe them. Thus a criminal receives ſentence from his Judge—a ſervant reproof from his maſter—and thus, on the day of Pentecoſt, Chriſt's murderers were convinced of ſin ſorely againſt their inclination. And are not our minds frequently ſurprized, by receiving the knowledge of that which gives us pleaſure? But what is that inability in man which is the ground of his oppoſition to the truth; are not we too apt to forget ourſelves that it is of a moral and ſpiritual nature?

ture? That it conſiſts in having the underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, and that the ſoul being under the fatal influence of error, ignorance, and unbelief, it oppoſes the true grace of God? Are we not too apt to forget that the language uſed to deſcribe this awful ſtate is frequently metaphorical, and in conſequence thereof, run into ſome thoughts of a phyſical or natural death of the ſoul, or privation of the animal life, at leaſt of the natural faculties? But does not man's *inability* conſiſt in his loving darkneſs rather than light, in a diſinclination to depend upon a holy ſovereign God; and not from the want of rational faculties, ſo that he *would* return to, and depend upon, God if he *could?* Now it is perfectly agreeably to ſound reaſon and good ſenſe to ſay in this caſe, that if the *cauſe* of this ſpiritual death be removed, the neceſſary effects thereof will be removed alſo: and if the diſeaſe conſiſt in error, ignorance, and unbelief; theſe being done away, and truth, knowledge, and faith implanted in their ſtead; the ſoul muſt be renewed; the renewal will conſiſt in the implanting of theſe things; and that which removed their oppoſites may, with propriety, be termed the means or inſtrument of the work. If then ignorance, &c. are the very eſſence of the natural man's darkneſs; what can remove it but the entrance of the light of divine truth? For as when the ſun riſeth darkneſs fleeth away, ſo *the entrance of the word giveth light: it giveth underſtanding unto the ſimple*, Pſalm cxix. 130. That is, the word is the very firſt principle of ſpiritual light in the ſoul: and this word, under the direction, and by the influence of the Spirit of grace, being implanted in the ſoul, light, life and ſpiritual activity, are the certain concomitants. As then, the very eſſence of ſpiritual death, conſiſts of ignorance about

about God's true character, of error about the way of ſalvation by Chriſt Jeſus, and in diſbelieving the divine word; and as the true character of God, the way of life, &c. are only made known in the ſcripture, ſpiritual death, or man's natural darkneſs cannot be removed, and the divine life communicated to the ſoul, but by the entrance of *the word* through the power of the Spirit.

But let us conſider thoſe irrational conſequences which we are thought to fall into by this kind of doctrine. (1ſt.) "It cannot be rationally received, that the principle of grace is the word implanted, unleſs we can make it out that one can ſee without eyes." Here it is readily acknowledged, that we muſt have eyes before we can perceive objects; and alſo that we muſt have a ſpiritual principle before we can diſcern divine beauties; but it ſhould be kept in mind, that the hinge upon which the inquiry turns, is—*what* is that principle, and *how* is it implanted? As it is commonly acknowledged, that Chriſt's miracles of healing all manner of ſickneſſes, &c. were ſigns of his ability to ſave his people from their ſins; ſo alſo that the way which he took to perform them, ſerves as a fit illuſtration of that way, by which he bleſſes his choſen with all ſpiritual bleſſings. Mark x. 52, informs us, that ſight was given to the blind by the *word* of Jeſus. It appears to be in the ſame way that Saul of Tarſus received his ſight, Acts ix. 17: in other caſes Jeſus choſe, by his word, to give ſucceſs to different means, Matt. ix. 28, 29, John ix. 1, though he could have done it by mere inviſible energy. We have ſeen wherein ſpiritual blindneſs conſiſts, and likewiſe how it is removed: to what has been obſerved might be added, Pſalm xix. 8—"The *commandment* of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes," even as we may ſuppoſe the entrance of a *torch* enlightens a dark

dark room; to do which, would it not be abſurd to ſay, that there muſt of neceſſity be ſome principles of light in the dark room, which diſpoſed it to receive the light? Rather did not the light diſperſe the darkneſs? Even ſo did the word of Jeſus diſperſe the natural darkneſs of him mentioned, Mark x. 52; and in like manner is ſpiritual eyeſight given to thoſe, whoſe underſtanding the god of this world has blinded. (2dly,) Nor ſhall we be driven to embrace the irrational notion, of "hearing without ears;" for admitting the phyſical neceſſity of having the ſenſe of hearing, previous to being active in the reception of ſounds; the point pleaded for is ſufficiently eſtabliſhed by ſubmitting to the ſimple dictates of ſcripture upon this head; not only in Mark vii. 32, have we an account of a deaf man being brought to Jeſus to be cured and v. 34, of the manner *how* the cure was wrought; (Jeſus looking up to heaven, ſighed, and ſaid unto him, *Ephphatha*, that is, be opened, and ſtraightway his ears were opened); but Pſalm lviii. 4, 5, ſpiritual deafneſs is thus deſcribed: "They are like the deaf adder that ſtoppeth her ears: which *will not hear* the voice of charmers, charming ever ſo wiſely;" plainly ſhowing, that this deafneſs is not any defect ſubſiſting in the natural faculties, but mere enmity to that which addreſſes them, Acts vii. 57. Hence it is ſaid, "Bring the deaf men that have ears." And ſurely he who firſt formed the ear can, whenever it pleaſes him, command attention, and by the force of his almighty voice, cauſe not only the *deaf*, but even the *dead*, to hear and obey him. He ſaith, Iſaiah xxxv. 5. The ears of the deaf ſhall be unſtopped; and it ſhould be obſerved that the truth as it is in Jeſus, is not received upon a long chain of rational concluſions; but upon the authority of him who ſpeaks in the ſacred records. We may ſee this ſentiment confirmed in various places in the ſcriptures.—Our firſt parents fell by admitting a falſehood

falſehood into their minds: and they were renewed in *knowledge*, by hearing the voice of the Lord God conveying the welcome tidings of a Saviour. Was there any principle of grace in Adam's heart previous to the hearing the word of reconciliation? And was not the divine word the inſtrument of conveying that knowledge whereby he was renewed? Surely no one can put on a face to deny the laſt queſtion; and without doubt corruption and grace, and their methods of working, are the ſame in all ages.—The caſe of Matthew is much to our purpoſe, Luke v. 27, 28, to ſee a man of his infamous character—in the midſt of his avaricious and oppreſſive employment, wrought upon by a *word ſpeaking: ſo* wrought upon as to change the whole bias of his ſoul; is ſuch a proof that the word is paſſively implanted—that it is the very firſt principle of light, and the inſtrument of regeneration, that it requires a good deal of *art* to make even a tolerable oppoſition to it.—The inſtance of Zaccheus recorded Luke xix. 1—6, corroborates the doctrine. It will hardly be thought, that grace in his heart influenced him to climb the tree; for nothing is more plain than that he was then a graceleſs wretch. Curioſity ſeems to have been the motive, that he might the more advantageouſly behold Jeſus, whom he had heard of as an extraordinary perſon. When the Saviour SAID unto him, make haſte and come down, &c. the happy effects quickly manifeſted, that the heavenly *word* was quick and powerful, and brought every needful requiſite along with it.—* Paul's regeneration is thus recorded, Acts ix. 3—8. where it is obvious, that the

* Mr. Hervey ſays, pointing to the apoſtle's own words in deſcribing his converſion, "Can any thing denote a more iniquitous and ſavage temper! 'Tis the very picture of an incarnate devil—the favour of man is backward to interpoſe till ſomething amiable and inviting appears in the object; but the grace of God is immenſely rich, and infinitely free. It *prevents* the moſt vile and hardened

the VOICE accompanied with divine power unſtopped his deaf ears.

Let us now conſider the genuine import of ſome paſſages of ſcripture which are made uſe of to prove the *previous principle:* 1ſt. The implanting of grace in the heart is, Eph. ii. 1, called *quickening*, and we are aſked, "What inſtrument does God make uſe of to implant the ſoul in the body?" In reply to this *deep* queſtion, the writer frankly confeſſes he cannot tell. But if the inquiry be, how is a ſoul dead in treſpaſſes and ſins quickened and made alive unto God, the ſcriptures furniſh us with a ſufficient reply, John v. 24, 25. When the word of grace enters into the ſoul, through divine influence, it conveys the knowledge of Chriſt, which quickens the mind to delight in him, and ardently to long after him, John iv. 10. 1 Cor. xv. 45. 1 John v. 11, 12. As the ſpirit dwelling in the firſt Adam's body, made him a living ſoul; even ſo Chriſt dwelling in the heart by faith, begins and maintains the life of God there. Such a ſoul will ſay, with the pſalmiſt, "Thy *word* has quickened me." 2dly. The implanting grace in the heart is called a reſurrection, Eph. i. 19, 20. and the queſtion put in favour of the previous principle is, "What inſtrument do you ſuppoſe Jehovah made uſe of, when he raiſed Chriſt from the dead, and what inſtrument will he make uſe of in the reſurrection of the dead?" and it has been added "none at all, no not even his *word*." Here it ſhould be obſerved, that power or efficacy muſt always

hardened rebel, it brings every requiſite, and recommendation in its own unſpeakable beneficent nature. It accompliſhes all its bleſſed ends, not by any *towardly* diſpoſition in the ſinner; but by that one glorious righteouſneſs provided in the Saviour. This overtook the perſecutor in his journey to Damaſcus, light and comfort were poured upon him, *not from any dawn of reformation* in himſelf, but from a very different quarter; by opening as it were a window in heaven, while he ſojourned even in the ſuburbs of hell. *He ſaw that juſt one*, and was made partaker of the ineſtimable gift."

always be of ſuch a nature as is ſuited to the object upon which it is exerted. And though it may appear, that the power which raiſed Chriſt from the dead was what may be called a *phyſical* power, it does not follow, that the *ſame kind* muſt be exerted towards them that believe; nay, the contrary is manifeſt, ver. 17, 18. But then we are told, that the metaphor is deſtroyed. By no means; for in both caſes, nothing leſs than the great power mentioned in the words is exerted by the divine Spirit; and this is the very eſſence of the metaphor. And as to the ſpiritual reſurrection, we are expreſsly told, Col. ii. 12, that it is produced through the faith of the operation of God; ſee Ez. xxxvii. 1—10—3dly. The work is compared to the creation, Eph. ii. 10, and we are aſked, what inſtrument was made uſe of in that work? and reminded of Job xliv. 24. That the old creation was a figure of the new will appear by comparing the one with the other. The firſt creation of the world was out of nothing, ſo nothing was prepared for the ſecond, no good, no virtue, NO PREVIOUS DISPOSITIONS in the ſubject: yea, ſomething indeed was in being, which had no place in the old; but that was only rebellion and enmity, making vehement oppoſition to the almighty grace of God. The firſt was performed by the COMMAND of God, the ſecond in like manner, "Of his own will begat he us by the WORD OF TRUTH, James i. 18. The rudiments of the firſt were an undigeſted maſs. "*The earth was without form, and void, and darkneſs was upon the face of the deep.*" Gen. i. 2. In like manner, all things lie in baſe confuſion in the ſoul, when it is to be adorned by the new creation, and depraved luſts are violently agitated every where, without any order. Thoſe things which ſhould poſſeſs the upper place, are depreſſed to the loweſt. There is alſo a ſurpriſing emptineſs of every thing that is good, Rom. vii. 18,

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Neither are all things only ſurrounded with the groſs darkneſs of ignorance, but the whole ſoul is nothing but darkneſs itſelf, Eph. v. 8. When God was pleaſed to adorn the world he had created, he began with the production of light, and he takes the ſame method in this other creation. "God who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined in our hearts, &c. 2 Cor. iv. 6. † 4thly. The caſe of infants is thrown in, as an unſurmountable objection to this doctrine; yea, it is ſaid that, "Upon this plan there is as much ground for the regeneration and ſalvation of infants, as there is for that of *devils!!*" That *all* infants are ſaved, is a pleaſing fact founded in the word of truth; for Chriſt ſays "Of *ſuch* (that is, moſtly of ſuch) is the kingdom of heaven," even that innumerable multitude made righteous by the obedience of the divine ſurety, Rev. vii. 9. Infants have done no evil, and yet die by the imputation of the firſt Adam's tranſgreſſion: they have done no *good*, and yet are entitled to eternal life through the obedience of the ſecond Adam, and ſo enter in upon the very ſame footing as Paul, and all others that are ſaved. But it is a hard matter for us to ſubmit to that doctrine which teaches us to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. Yet whoever think that their believing, or any activity in themſelves whatever, is taken into conſideration in their juſtification to eternal life, are without doubt ignorant of the true grace of God. Without admitting the ſalvation of infants, it cannot be ſhown, how Chriſt has bruiſed the ſerpent's head—deſtroyed the works of the devil—and aboliſhed death. It is plain infants are among the number mentioned, Rev. xx. 12—15. But they not having done evil, can have no ſin charged upon them againſt either the law of nature, the written law, or the goſpel, ſo cannot

† See *Witſius' Oecon.* b. 4. chap. 6. p. 49—50.

not be judged and condemned out of theſe books. We muſt either ſay, therefore, that there is a purgatory for them, or, according to ſome modern refiners of Popery, *a middle ſtate*, the notion of which is without the ſhadow of a foundation in ſcripture, and is abſolute nonſenſe; or admit, that they are written in the Lamb's book of life. See Deut. i. 39. And if a perſon is *paſſive* in receiving the truth, then why may we not ſay that the efficacy of the divine Spirit can and does implant the truth in the ſoul of an infant: which we can have as clear conceptions of as that which is ſo generally admitted, viz. that a falſehood, firſt inſtilled into our federal-head, dwells in them, and corrupts their ſouls. 5thly. It has been thought that the *good and honeſt* heart, mentioned Mat. xiii. 8. Luke viii. 15. is an argument in favour of grace in the heart, previous to the truth being implanted. To this it has been obſerved, that the ſcope of the parable is to repreſent the different effects of the word. But this has been cavilled at, though never yet ſufficiently refuted. Some, however, have thought, that the good and honeſt heart has reference to thoſe who, like Simeon, Cornelius, &c. were waiting for the kingdom of God; who had believed in the Saviour *to come*, and ſo were juſtified by his righteouſneſs, as Abraham was; and who, when they heard the word, teſtifying that the Chriſt was actually come, readily received it. From the whole, if grace can be in the heart, previous to the word of Chriſt entering there, then the goſpel is not the power of God unto ſalvation; neither is there any eſſential need of Chriſt, eſpecially not of his word. For whoever is regenerated ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, becauſe ſuch being born of God, are heirs of the promiſe of eternal life; and can this be, without underſtanding and knowing the true character of God, or believing

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in the name of Chriſt, or even hearing of his name? Though the implanting of this principle in the heart, is aſcribed to the Spirit of God; it is plain, that he has nothing to do in the affair: for it is his office to teſtify of Jeſus, and to apply the things which ſpeak of him. He works, not by energy alone, but by the almighty, perſuaſive force of truth; and by inſtruction leads thoſe whom he teaches, to ſpeak of Chriſt, and to rejoice in him. But the ſpirit that implants this previous principle, leads perſons to boaſt but too commonly of *themſelves*; he cannot therefore be the Spirit of God; nor is it the true grace of God which he implants; and it muſt follow, that the various ſyſtems of doctrinal and experimental religion, that are founded upon this principle, are eſſentially different, in their *nature* and neceſſary tendency, from the goſpel of the grace of God. Their neceſſary tendency, therefore, muſt be to miſlead, perplex and entangle, if not to delude and deſtroy the ſouls, who are founding their hope of eternal life upon them.

Having ſaid ſo much in oppoſition to the diſtinct, previous principle of grace in the heart generally pleaded for, and but too commonly made the foundation of a profeſſor's hope, as it is moſt obviouſly the ſource of various errors, more eſpecially in experimental religion; I ſhall do little more in this ſection, than briefly ſhow wherein the true principle of grace conſiſts—confirm the ſentiment by the word of God—and then ſhew the harmony of this view of the principle of grace, with every other part of the revelation of the true grace of God.

The *true* principle of grace in the ſoul is the GOSPEL in its true import, implanted there by the Spirit of God, which is properly a divine *inſtinct*, a *living* and *abiding* principle. It counterbalances the corrupt principle which reſides in the ſoul; and powerfully

fully and effectually inclines it to deſire the ſincere milk of the word—to live upon the fulneſs of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt—to exerciſe every becoming affection towards him, as he is revealed in the word—and influences to a conduct agreeable to the goſpel. This is that new heart and right ſpirit promiſed in the new covenant, and the ſcriptures expreſsly prove that the truth in the love of it, dwelling in the heart, is the *only* grace of God that his Spirit implants, Heb. x. 16. Iſ. li. 4. John xii. 49, 50. Rom. iii. 27. ch. viii. 2. Is it inquired, how we are made partakers of the DIVINE NATURE, that is, of the *communicable* attributes of God, his wiſdom, happineſs, love, and holineſs? Peter informs us, that it is through the *knowledge* of him who hath called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious *promiſes*; that *by theſe* you might be made partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter i. 3, 4. Is it aſked, how do we become the children of God? The reply is, "*Being born again, not with corruptible ſeed, but incorruptible, by the* WORD OF GOD *which* LIVETH AND ABIDETH FOR EVER, *even the word which by the goſpel is preached unto you.*" Jam. i. 18. 1 Peter i. 23. The word is the SEED, the ſupernatural, vital, unchanging, incorruptible principle of *divine life*. Spiritual life is only in Chriſt, and is communicated from him by knowledge to his people. *God hath given us eternal life, and this life* is IN HIS SON. *He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life*, 1 John v. 11, 12. however much he may amuſe himſelf with a notion of a principle of grace dwelling in his heart. Theſe ſimple declarations of ſcripture confirm the doctrine under conſideration, beyond all reaſonable contradiction. This is life eternal to *know* the only true God and Jeſus Chriſt; and if any modern refiner ſhould object

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to theſe, a thouſand paſſages that *ſeem* to make againſt it, and thereby urge the old inſinuation, "Yea hath God ſaid," &c. the ſcriptures being one perfect harmonious ſyſtem of incorruptible truth, clear of the leaſt contradiction in any of its parts, we ſhould take the plain evidence of theſe divine witneſſes as abſolutely deciſive, and impute any quibble that forms a ſeeming contradiction, to the blindneſs of man, who naturally oppoſes his own wiſdom to the revelation of God. We may here take notice, how ſuitable the divine word, in the hand of the Spirit, is, to perform every operation by which this principle is denominated. Is it called *grace in the heart?* The goſpel is ſtiled *The word of grace.* Is it termed *The truth in us?* The goſpel is *The word of truth.* Is it called *life?* The ſcriptures are the *words of life.* Is it conceived of as a principle of *faith?* The goſpel record is *The word of faith*, &c.

When this divine principle is implanted in the ſoul, the true knowledge of God is given. That is, a true knowledge of God in Chriſt, where juſtice and mercy in perfection unite, ſhine, and harmonize. This is the true grace of God. This the ſinner believes with all his heart. His ſtanding is fixed upon it; and it begets every anſwerable affection there. Hence the true goſpel, being the proper principle of grace, begets in the ſoul faith, hope, love, &c. and is the genuine ſource of all true experience. This view of things preſerves the glorious ſyſtem of grace, in its beautiful ſymmetry, its grand and uniform connection. Let us take a ſummary view thereof. If we conceive of grace dwelling in the eternal purpoſe, it is nothing more than Jehovah's ſovereign deſign of ſhewing favour to the people of his choice, through the Son of his love. If we take the term for the manifeſtation of his great love, free favour and bound-

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leſs compaſſion, it is diſcovered in the incarnation, life, ſufferings, and death of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom grace and truth came. If we ſpeak of grace as a doctrine, then it is the word of truth, revealing, explaining, and proclaiming the nature, end, and deſign of Chriſt's work, as the Surety of his people. And if we take the term to ſignify that vital principle, by which we are partakers of ſpiritual life, it is the doctrine of Chriſt implanted in the underſtanding, poſſeſſing the will, and influencing the affections and converſation: and ſo conforming the ſoul to Chriſt, which was the very end of being choſen in him before the foundation of the world.

The following remarkable words of Dr. Owen, may be conſidered as an epitome of the whole of this eſſay, and with them I conclude it: "As the word is in the goſpel, ſo is grace in the heart; yea they are the *ſame things variouſly* expreſſed, Rom. vi. 17, as our tranſlation doth not, ſo I know not how, in ſo few words, to expreſs that which is *emphatically* here inſinuated by the Holy Ghoſt. The meaning is, that the doctrine of the goſpel begets the *form*, *figure*, *image*, or *likeneſs* of itſelf, in the hearts of them that believe: ſo they are caſt into the *mould* of it. As is the one, ſo is the other. The principle of grace in the *heart*, and that in the word, are as children of the ſame parent, completely reſembling and repreſenting one another. Grace is a *living word*, and the word is figured, *limned grace*. As we have heard, ſo have we ſeen and found it; ſuch a ſoul can produce the *duplicate* of the word, and ſo adjuſt all things thereby. The firſt original expreſſion of divine truth is not in the word, no not as given out from the infinite abyſs of divine wiſdom and veracity, but it is firſt hid, laid up, and expreſſed in the perſon of Chriſt. HE is the firſt pattern of truth, which from him is expreſſed in

the *word*, and *from, and by the word impreſſed* on the hearts of believers; ſo that as it hath pleaſed God that all the *treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge ſhould be in him*, dwell in him, have their principal reſidence in him, Col. ii. 3, ſo the whole word is but a revelation of the *Truth in Chriſt*, or an expreſſion of his image and likeneſs to the ſons of men. Thus we are ſaid to *learn the truth as it is in Jeſus*, Eph. iv. 21. It is *in Jeſus originally*, and really, and from him it is communicated unto us by the word. We are thereby *taught*, and do learn it; for thereby, as the apoſtle proceeds, *we are* renewed in the ſpirit of our mind, and do put on the new man which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs, ver. 23, 24. Firſt, the truth is in Jeſus; then it is expreſſed in the word; *this word*, learned and believed, becomes *grace in the heart*, every way anſwering unto the Lord Chriſt his *image*, from whom this *transforming truth* did thus proceed. Nay, this is carried by the apoſtle yet higher, namely, unto God the Father himſelf, whoſe *image* Chriſt is, and believers his, through the word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. "We all with open face beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord;" whereunto add, chap. iv. 6. "God who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt." The firſt pattern or example of all truth and holineſs is God himſelf: hereof Chriſt is the *image*, ver. 4. Chriſt is the image of God, "The brightneſs of his glory and the expreſs image of his perſon," Heb. i. 3. "The image of the inviſible God," Col. i. 15. Hence we are ſaid to ſee the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt; becauſe he, being *his image*, the love, grace, and truth of

of the Father are repreſented and made conſpicuous in him. For we are ſaid to behold it *in his face*, becauſe of the open and *illuſtrious* manifeſtation of the glory of God in him. And how do we behold this glory? in a glaſs (as in a glaſs) that is, in the goſpel, which hath the image and likeneſs of Chriſt, who is the image of God, reflected upon it, and communicated unto it. So have we traced truth and grace, from the perſon of the Father, unto the Son as *Mediator*, and thence transfuſed it into the word. In the Father it is *eſſentially*, in Jeſus Chriſt *originally* and *exemplarily*, and in the word as in a *tranſcript* or copy. But doth it abide there? No, God *by the word of the goſpel* ſhines into our hearts. He irradiates our minds with a ſaving light into it, and apprehenſion of it. And what thence enſues? the ſoul of a believer is *changed into the ſame image*, by the effectual working of the Holy Ghoſt, chap. iii. 18. that is, the *likeneſs* of Chriſt implanted on the word, is impreſſed on the ſoul itſelf, whereby it is renewed into the image of God, whereunto it was at firſt created. This brings all into perfect harmony." *

* See Dr. Owen on the 130th Pſalm, p. 168—170. Quarto edit.

ESSAY II.

ON THE NATURE OF FAITH.

——*One faith.* Eph. iv. 5.

INTRODUCTION.

IT has much prevailed as a faſhionable ſentiment, though it diſplays great ignorance of human wretchedneſs, and the vaſt extent of the holy law, that if we walk before God according to that light which is afforded us, either by nature, or religious inſtruction, our ſervices will be pleaſing to God, and without doubt we ſhall be happy with him for ever. From hence it has been argued, that if it be true that man can pleaſe God here, and enjoy him hereafter, by doing the beſt he can, there can be no neceſſity for him to trouble himſelf about thoſe matters of *opinion*, about which even the wiſe, the learned, and the religious, are ſo much divided. Yea, it has been thought that an attention to thoſe things has been the grand cauſe of the preſent glaring declenſion in PIETY. But ſurely ſuch are not aware, that this ſentiment is immediately oppoſed, and effectually overthrown, by the unerring word of God, which declares that *without* FAITH *it is impoſſible to pleaſe him*; and alſo that there is no acceptable worſhip without it; *for he that cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* Which includes, not only a belief that there is a God, which the

the devils believe and tremble at, but that he is ſuch an one as the ſcriptures repreſent him to be. To form ideas of the great God contrary to his true character, and to worſhip him according to our own falſe imaginations, is to worſhip we know not what; is to worſhip, in fact, an imaginary god. All ſuch worſhip, therefore, although attended with the formalities of invocation, adoration, confeſſion, petition, ſupplication, dedication, &c. and with the moſt animated harangues, about the excellencies of virtue, and the extenſive rewards of piety, or even of the happineſs and comfort of the people of God, is not only unprofitable, being unmixed with faith, but odious and abominable in the ſight of God. Iſaiah lxvi. 3, 4. Rom. xiv. 23. Pſalm l. 21.

Again: true holineſs, whether of heart or converſation, cannot poſſibly be without *faith*, for in reality faith is the grand ſource from whence it flows. Such is the inſeparable connection betwixt faith and ſanctification, that where *works* do not appear, faith is dead; and where *faith* does not dwell, works are dead alſo. Works, therefore, without faith in Chriſt, however ſplendid, are of no account at all in the ſight of God; and the heart not being purified by faith, being naturally polluted, cannot but bring forth corrupt fruits, even as a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

Further: faith is eſſentially neceſſary to ſalvation. The ſcripture teaches us, that there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved, but the ſacred name of Jeſus Chriſt, and moſt ſolemnly avers, *He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, becauſe he hath not believed on the name of the only begotton Son of God*, John iii. 18—36; and notwithſtanding the moſt decent appearance among men, unbelievers are ranked in that black liſt of characters,

that are excluded the kingdom of heaven. Luke xii. 46, Rev. xvi. 8.

The neceſſity and importance of proceeding with the greateſt care, in our inquiries about faith, will appear, if we add to the above conſiderations, that *all men have not faith*—that there is ſuch a thing as a dead faith—a feigned faith, &c.—that, in reality, there is but *one faith* that will profit the ſoul. Yet if we attend to the prevailing cavils in the profeſſing world about faith, it will not be wondered at, that men of ſenſe, who have not the fear of God before their eyes, reject every ſyſtem of religion as a mere farce, or that *deiſm* ſhould ſo much prevail in our day. For while they behold *that faith*, which is in general acknowledged eſſential to ſalvation, made a matter of doubtful diſputation; by ſome made *any thing*, by others *nothing*; by a third claſs, *every thing*; and by a fourth, *worſe than nothing*; they cannot think that *all* are right; nor can they think it conſiſtent to ſuppoſe, that the God of nature, the fountain of all intelligence, would give a revelation to his creatures that was altogether unintelligible; and if perſons were not led more by faſhion and cuſtom (for it is become rather indecent to be of no religion) in their religious profeſſion, than ſolid reflection; they would either reject all religion, and commence Deiſts, or renounce the vain jangling of the profeſſing world, and become Chriſtians indeed, by receiving that truth which is able to ſave their ſouls. It remains, therefore, that there is no conſiſtent medium between antient apoſtolic Chriſtianity, and downright infidelity; and accordingly, in ſtrict truth, in his ſight who ſearches the heart, there are but two ſorts of men in Chriſtendom; and at the day of judgment it will appear ſo to all the world. Now we are divided into a great variety of ſects and parties, but *then* of all theſe ſects and parties, there

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ſhall appear but two ſorts of men, *believers*, and *unbelievers*. And then that moſt remarkable ſaying of Jeſus Chriſt will take effect and be fulfilled, *He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* See Bellamy's Eſſay on the Goſpel, p. 252.

SECTION I.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE VARIOUS NOTIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF FAITH.

FAITH, in the Scripture account of it, is a very ſimple, intelligible thing. But as it is retailed out in the profeſſing world, it is ſometimes ſo cut and trimmed, ſo changed and metamorphoſed, that it is hard to ſay, after all the definitions and directions that have been given, what it is, wherein it conſiſts, or how it is to be performed! Some notice, however, may be taken of the names which have been given it, in ſome of its tranſmutations, though fully to explain their genuine import, our ſkill would fail us in attempting, 1 Tim. i, 6, 7. Faith then, as it appears in human writings, has among ſeveral, others, obtained the following epithets, viz. hiſtorical faith, temporary faith, the faith of reliance, the faith of affiance, the faith of application, the faith of approbation, the direct, the reflex, the recumbent, the courageous, the ventureſome, and the triumphant, acts of faith. It is alſo repreſented by ſome as having, and putting into action, eyes, ears, mouth, arms, hands, fingers, legs, and feet.—To deſcribe theſe various kinds of faith, and to give direction when each of theſe acts ſhould be put forth,

forth, or which of theſe members ſhould be exerted, has ſerved to employ the time, talents, and ingenuity of many, though, after all, few of them, if any, have condeſcended to make it appear, how their notion of faith is conſiſtent, either with the Scripture definition thereof, or the uſe of the term in common life. Fearing, therefore, leſt I ſhould get involved in a labyrinth of inextricable difficulties, ſhould I attempt to explain the above terms, and indeed, not ſeeing what uſe my labours would be of, had I talents to perform it, I ſhall leave that part of the work to thoſe that have more time on their hands than I have, and whoſe reputation and intereſt may lie more in the uſe of them, than mine happens to do. However, a few of the moſt intelligent definitions that have been given may be conſidered.

Firſt: it has been received as a common axiom, for the uſe of the weak and wavering, who nevertheleſs wiſh to think well of themſelves in religious concerns, that the *deſire* of grace, is grace; and ſo, that the *deſire* of faith, is faith. "So if there be but a willing mind to this ſervice it is accepted."—Without doubt, where the true grace of God is known, there will be an earneſt deſire after its increaſe, it being a living principle in the ſoul. But ſurely this is a very unwarrantable way of proceeding, either in defining faith, or leading thoſe who wiſh to know whether they have believed or not, to a fair trial. The human heart is deceitful above all things, and is ever ready to fancy what is moſt agreeable; and indeed there are but few under a religious profeſſion, but are ready to think, that they ſincerely deſire and endeavour to believe, though they are not *able* to perform their deſire. Surely then we are not allowed to ſay, that *every deſire* of faith is faith; this would be too vague. The deſire then muſt be limited, and of courſe qualified. Without

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but doubt it ſhould be, in order to prove itſelf genuine, an humble, penitent, ſincere, earneſt, and affectionate deſire. But there are ſome very material objections to this notion of faith; Firſt:—it leads thoſe who think they have ſuch a deſire, to preſume upon it. If a ſenſe of guilt trouble the conſcience, nothing but that which fairly atones for ſin can effectually remove it. But ſinners are naturally diſaffected to the goſpel hope, and would rather catch at any thing for preſent relief, than give up every good thought of themſelves, and be relieved by that which is equally free for the profligate, as for the morally decent. To lead ſinners therefore to take peace, or encouragement, from the workings of their own minds (which, while in a ſtate of nature, are nothing better than the working of pride) is to eſtabliſh them in their enmity to the goſpel hope; and this cannot be done without confirming them in preſumption. Again: it tends to, and often actually does, involve thoſe for whoſe relief it is intended, in greater diſtreſs, ſince it is told them that the deſire muſt be *qualified*. The diſtreſſed perſon is led to ſeek within himſelf, for the approved qualities of this deſire, but finding ſo much of the world there, ſo many interruptions in his devotion, ſo many inſtances of deceit in his heart, &c. either he comes to a concluſion that he has not *ſuch* a deſire, or has it not to that degree, which it is thought neceſſary, in order to conſtitute a *right* deſire. This he ſincerely laments; yet lives in ſad ſuſpenſe from day to day, waiting and praying, as he is encouraged, for this deſire. Sometimes he thinks (eſpecially under preaching) he has obtained it, and *then* hope, joy, and comfort, begin to ariſe. Anon all theſe pleaſing ſymptoms are cut down, dried up, and withered! then his life hangs in doubt, and were it not that he is told by his miſerable comforters, that

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to ſincerely lament theſe things is a token for good, his ſoul would be driven into black deſpair, unleſs it could obtain ſome temporary eaſe, by mingling again with the world. It needs not be told, at leaſt to thoſe who have had acceſs to *claſs-meetings*, and meetings for relating experiences, how common this method of comforting them that mourn, is in our day. But ah! how foreign to the hope ſet before us in the goſpel! In fact it is neither law nor goſpel. Neither works nor grace. But a mere device of Satan to blind the minds of them that believe not, 2 Cor. x. 12. For

Further: the thing itſelf is contrary to ſcripture and common ſenſe. When a perſon ſays, "I deſire to believe," * nothing more pertinent can be replied than, why then don't you believe? Does ſome ſovereign power, ſome fatal neceſſity, prevent you? Or have

* What is here ſuppoſed, is a great miſtake, and groſs abſurdity; even that men may ſincerely chuſe and deſire thoſe ſpiritual duties of love, acceptance, choice, rejection, &c. conſiſting in the exerciſe of the will itſelf, or in the diſpoſition and inclination of the heart; and yet not be able to perform or exert them. This is abſurd, becauſe it ſuppoſes, that a man directly, properly, and ſincerely, [illegible] contrary to his inclination, and that is to ſuppoſe him not to be inclined to that which he is inclined to. If a man, in the diſpoſition and acts of his will and inclination does properly and directly fall in with thoſe duties, he therein virtually performs them; for the duties themſelves conſiſt in that very thing, they conſiſt in the ſtate and acts of the will being ſo formed and directed. If the ſoul properly and ſincerely falls in with a certain propoſed act of will or choice, the ſoul therein makes that choice its own. Even as when a moving body falls in with a propoſed direction of its motion, that is the ſame thing as to move in that direction. That which is called a *deſire* and *willingneſs* for theſe inward duties, in ſuch as do not perform them, has reſpect to thoſe duties only indirectly and remotely, and is improperly repreſented as a willingneſs for them; not only becauſe it reſpects thoſe good volitions only in a diſtant view, and with reſpect to future time; but alſo becauſe evermore, not theſe things themſelves, but ſomething elſe, that is alien and foreign, is the object that terminates theſe volitions and deſires.—*See Edwards on Free Will, p.* 238.

have you a ſincere deſire to believe what God has ſaid, only there is not ſufficient evidence thereof; the ſalvation is deſirable, but not ſufficiently proved to be true? Rather, does not your unbelief proceed from ignorance, and a conſequent diſinclination to believe? Without doubt it does. But to convince of this is a work, which he only, whoſe name is the ALMIGHTY, can perform. Therefore is it ſaid, by way of apology, that ſuch *deſire* to know the goſpel. Then ſurely the nature, deſign, and evidence of the goſpel ſalvation ſhould be laid before them, inſtead of putting them to pore upon their own hearts, in order to extract ſome kind of comfort from their ſuppoſed *deſires*.

But, as before hinted, the plain fact is, the goſpel hope is thought to be too weak to ſupport them; and therefore this humble, ſincere, earneſt, and affectionate deſire, is to believe, not in Chriſt alone, but that they are the children of the Moſt High, the peculiar favourites of heaven. This deſire, therefore, may be conſidered as an important ſtruggle between *conſcience*, which bears witneſs that they *are not* the children of God, and which the holy Spirit in the word confirms —and the aſpirations of their *pride*, under the influence of that antient doctrine, *Ye ſhall be as gods*. Now as the *former* prevails, conviction, fear, ſhame, and torment, are the painful conſequences. But when the *latter* gains the aſcendency, and ſo the conſcience becomes blinded or ſeared thereby, then ſome kind of peace, joy, and comfort, are its attendants. But if ſuch perſons are, through divine teaching, mercifully brought to obtain peace by the blood of the Redeemer's croſs; they will then perceive, that all their previous deſires, prayers, reſolutions, and endeavours, were not in reality after God's ſalvation, but aimed at *doing* or *feeling* ſomething from which, or through which, their peace and hope might be derived.

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Once more: the perſon who is ſeeking faith, or deſiring to believe, muſt either be a believer or an unbeliever; for between theſe there is no conſiſtent medium. He cannot be a believer, or elſe what he profeſſes to believe, would give reſt to his ſoul. *For being juſtified by faith, he would have peace with God,* and ceaſe from thoſe fruitleſs works, &c. He muſt therefore be an unbeliever; and *as ſuch* is in a *carnal ſtate.* But the carnal mind is enmity againſt God. Therefore, though it is natural enough, for one, under the alarms of conſcience, ſincerely to deſire *peace*; it is neither ſcriptural nor rational to ſay, he deſires to believe the truth of Chriſt, or is ſeeking faith in him. He does not underſtand or know what faith in Chriſt is; how then can he ſeek it? His heart riſes in enmity when the pure goſpel is preached; how then can he deſire it? Would it not much better become Chriſtian teachers, when they have to deal with ſuch perſons as thoſe under conſideration, to copy after the example of Chriſt in his treatment of the like characters? Matt. xix. 16—21. &c.

Faith has alſo been defined a *condition* of juſtification, or that act of the mind which God requires us to exert, inſtead of obeying the whole law, and is frequently called obedience to the *new law.* This ſentiment has been ſufficiently expoſed by thoſe who have engaged in the Arminian controverſies; and ſtands ſo much oppoſed to ſalvation by grace, that no one can receive it, but he whoſe mind is blinded by the god of this world, and who is under a ſtrong deluſion to believe a lie. It indeed comes under the ſpecious recommendation of that doctrine, which would ſeem to wear the face of more than ordinary holineſs, but is in fact an abominable Antinomian tenet, and aims at making void the law. As to faith, it is as foreign to the ſcripture view of it, as darkneſs is to light.

light. I ſhall therefore offer no other refutation of this notion, than Paul's words, Rom. iv. 4, 5. *Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that juſtifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteouſneſs.*

Again: it has been ſaid that—"Faith is not ſimply the believing of any ſentence that is written, or that can be thought upon!"—It is ſeldom expreſſed in theſe very words, though the ſame thing is to be underſtood, when we are told that—"Faith is a ſaving grace, implanted in the heart at regeneration (and muſt therefore be previous to underſtanding and believing the goſpel) by the Spirit of God, and is a diſpoſition or readineſs in the human mind, to believe the goſpel."—But this faith, whatever it be, cannot be the faith of the operation of God; becauſe that comes by hearing the word of God. It is admitted, that unfeigned faith is a work of the Spirit, and that ſalvation is inſeparably connected with it; yet ſcripture and common ſenſe forbid us thinking, that faith can exiſt without a teſtimony. The abſurdity of this notion, about a diſpoſition in the mind towards the goſpel, previous to a true underſtanding thereof, has been ſhown in the ſixth ſection of the firſt eſſay.

By others faith has been defined, a belief that we have a right to ſalvation in preference to others—a belief that we are the elect of God—or a perſuaſion that Chriſt ſhed his blood for *me in particular*, or that I ſhall go to heaven, &c. That believers do come to a knowledge of their perſonal intereſt in Chriſt, and the things that they believe and hope in, is granted, and will be conſidered in its proper place. But it is moſt certain, that carnal men may and do embolden themſelves, upon falſe notions, to uſe the moſt con-

fident expreſſions about their perſonal intereſt in the favour of God. Such as, "I know ſo ſurely as that there is a God in heaven, that he is *my* God, and that I ſhall as ſurely go to heaven as if I were there," &c. Who more confident than the Phariſees? they had no doubt of God being their father; and yet, who more blind to the knowledge of the true God than they? If it be faith, to believe our relation to God, to call ourſelves *the dear people of his choice*, and appropriate all the bleſſings of eternal life to ourſelves; then the Phariſees had faith in a very eminent degree. But to ſuppoſe that faith conſiſts in a firm perſuaſion of our own intereſt, is, in effect, the very ſame thing as to ſay, faith is a believing that we believe. To this it will be objected, that wicked men, deceiving their own ſouls, in believing a lie, is no argument againſt the appropriating act of faith upon the grant of the goſpel. True, if that were all the ground of objection. But it wants evidence from ſcripture to ſupport that notion, that God promiſes eternal life to *every hearer* of the goſpel, or, which in fact is the ſame thing, that *every hearer* has a right to believe that Chriſt died for *him in particular*. It is granted that the goſpel proclaims ſalvation *indefinitely*, and declares that *every believer* thereof ſhall be ſaved, and that *whoſoever* believes on Chriſt, hath everlaſting life; yet it gives no ground for any one to aſſure himſelf in his firſt believing, that Chriſt and heaven are infallibly his. Every believer of the goſpel is confident that whoſoever believeth on Chriſt ſhall be ſaved, and that it may be ſaid of every one who is ſaved that Chriſt loved him, and gave himſelf for him *in particular*, while yet he is not confident that this is true of *himſelf*, becauſe it remains to be proved that he *has* believed, and that it is *the goſpel of Chriſt* which he

he does believe. * And ſince it is not any thing about ourſelves that we are immediately called to believe, but the teſtimony that God has given of his Son; our confidence, if it be that which the goſpel produces, is not in ourſelves, nor of the goodneſs of our ſtate, but in the ſufficiency of that ſalvation which the ſcriptures *indefinitely* proclaim. Beſides, ſome have rejoiced in the word of the goſpel, who have afterwards revolted from their profeſſion—many think they believe the truth, who are at the ſame time holding ſome fatal deluſion—and it is no where aſcertained in the word of God, that Chriſt died for the actual tranſgreſſions of any perſon in particular. But the MYSTERY of this ſort of faith is ſet before us in the following lines. "Let it be well obſerved, that the reaſon why we are to aſſure ourſelves in our faith, that God freely giveth Chriſt and his ſalvation to us particularly, is not, becauſe it is a truth before we believe it, but becauſe it becometh a certain truth when we believe it, and becauſe it will never be true except we do, in ſome meaſure perſuade and aſſure ourſelves that it is ſo. We have no abſolute promiſe or declaration in the ſcripture, that God certainly will or doth give Chriſt and his ſalvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already either by ſcripture, or ſenſe, or reaſon, before we aſſure ourſelves of it: yea, we are without Chriſt's

* When a man believes the goſpel he muſt be immediately conſcious that he does ſo; though this requires to be farther proved by the fruits of his faith: but if it alſo "remains to be proved that it is *the goſpel of Chriſt* that he does believe," he muſt either in the mean time be ſuſpending his belief of the goſpel till he obtain that proof, or elſe he muſt be believing it without proof. A proper attention to the difference between the evidence of the *truth of the goſpel*, and the evidence of *our believing it*, would have prevented this inaccuracy. Yet every man ought to take heed leſt he believe a falſe goſpel.—Ed.

ſalvation at preſent, in a ſtate of ſin and miſery, under the curſe and wrath of God. Only I ſhall prove, that we are bound, by the command of God, thus to aſſure ourſelves: and the ſcripture doth ſufficiently warrant us, that we ſhall not deceive ourſelves in believing a lie: but according to our faith, ſo ſhall it be to us. This is a ſtrange kind of aſſurance, far different from ordinary kinds; and therefore no wonder if it ſhould be found weak and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, and aſſaulted with many doubtings. We are concerned to believe other things on the clear evidence that they are true, and would remain true, whether we believe them or no; ſo that we cannot deny our aſſent without rebelling againſt the light of our ſenſes, reaſon, or conſcience. But here our aſſurance is not impreſſed on our thoughts by the evidence of the things; but we muſt work it out in ourſelves by the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of God, and thereby we bring our own thoughts into captivity, to the obedience of Chriſt. None but God can juſtly require of us this kind of aſſurance, becauſe he only *calleth thoſe things that are not, as though they were*, he only can give exiſtence to thoſe things that yet are not, and make a thing to be true upon our believing it, that was not true before." *

It is acknowledged in the above citation, that there is no evidence, of any kind, that God gives Chriſt and his ſalvation to *any one in particular*, before we abſolutely aſſure ourſelves of it—*that this is not a truth before we believe it*, and moreover, *will never be true except*

* Marſhall's Goſpel Myſtery of Sanctification, 8th Edit. pages 173, 174. The very ſingular nature of this quotation will ſufficiently apologize for receding from the method I have all along adopted of concealing the author's name from whom I have quoted. And unleſs I had referred to the book in which this *very deep* ſentiment is maintained, I ſhould have feared being ſuſpected by ſome, of having fabricated it myſelf.

except we do perſuade and aſſure ourſelves that it is ſo; but that which *was not true before, becometh a certain truth when we believe it!!!* Yet it is confeſſed, this doctrine of faith will not hold good in any other things; for we are concerned to believe them *on the clear evidence we have that they are true, and would remain true, whether we believe them or no.* To believe without evidence is not *faith*, but *fancy* and preſumption, whether the thing believed be human or divine. And it is moſt certain, that the very attempt to perſuade perſons to believe, without knowing what they are to believe, or without plain evidence that what they are called to believe is true, whether they believe it or no, would be hiſſed out of the world as an affront to common ſenſe in any thing but religious matters: in which, grievous to think, nothing is too abſurd to be propagated, or too ridiculous to be received! Is it then peculiar to the God of heaven, the ſource of intelligence, to ſet *falſehoods* before his creatures, to be transformed into *truths* by a confident belief of them, and to *bind* them by his command to perform the ſtrange operation? Far be it from him! ſhall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

I conclude this general view of the various notions of faith in the profeſſing world, with obſerving, that divine truth is always conſiſtent with itſelf, and *evidence* is its inſeparable characteriſtic; whereas falſehood wears many faces, and ſets the invention of its propagator upon the rack to cover its hateful appearance with the maſk of truth, in order to blind the underſtanding, ſear the conſcience, and delude the ſoul. Whether this appropriation therefore be ſupported by ſuppoſed qualifications—the imaginary "deed of gift"—or the courageous act of faith without evidence either from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, it is moſt certainly eſſentially different from believing the record

that God has given of his Son.—So that however well pleaſed any may be, in a full perſuaſion that they have *exerted the appropriating act*, unleſs more ſolid evidence of their actual intereſt in Chriſt be given, their claim will, in the end, be found miſerably deficient. And though perſons may ſtrain every nerve in laboring to believe that their ſtate is good, or to make that true which is not true before they believe it, it will remain an unchanging truth that, *he that believeth not* (that very goſpel which Chriſt and his Apoſtles preached) *ſhall be damned*.—Seeing then that there is but *one faith*, and that without *it* we cannot pleaſe God, acceptably worſhip him, or eternally enjoy him; and ſince thoſe various and oppoſite notions of faith prevailing in the profeſſing world, cannot all be right; it follows that there is danger of being deceived; this cautions us to inquire, wherein the very eſſence of the ONE FAITH conſiſts; which, when known, in obedience to the exhortation, we ſhould contend earneſtly for.

SECTION II.

ON THE FAITH OF THE OPERATION OF GOD.

THE inquiry in this Section is, principally, wherein the nature of that faith conſiſts which may with ſtrict propriety be ſtiled *like precious* with the Apoſtles; and in order to avoid an error in the propoſition, and ſo to prevent ſtumbling at the threſhold, I ſhall reſt ſatisfied with ſuch a definition of it as the BIBLE affords. And ſurely, when the unerring Spirit of truth condeſcends to define, and to point

point out a line of illuſtration; it manifeſts much pride and ignorance in any one to ſwerve from it. Nor is it to be wondered that any who ſwerve from the ſcriptural definition, ſhould alſo err from faith unfeigned, and turn aſide to vain jangling.

According to that very accurate divine, PAUL, *Faith is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not ſeen,** Heb. xi. 1. Here then we are preſented with a full, clear, and comprehenſive definition of *goſpel faith*: that faith which is of the operation of God, and without which we cannot pleaſe him. It conſiſts of two parts, viz. *the truth believed*, which is the ſubſtance of things hoped for; and *the belief of the truth*, which is the evidence of things not ſeen. † How plain, how rational, how worthy of

* It may not be improper here to obſerve, that this text is, by ſome, differently tranſlated. They ſay, the original word (*hypoſtaſis*) which is rendered *ſubſtance*, ſhould be tranſlated *confidence*, as in the margin, and in 2 Cor. ix. 4. ch. xi. 17. Heb. iii. 14. This confidence, ſay they, reſpects *things hoped for*; *i. e.* future good things promiſed, and is illuſtrated by the faith of the patriarchs. The other word (*elenchos*) *evidence*, they tranſlate *conviction*, *i. e. of things not ſeen*, which are more comprehenſive than *things hoped for*, as they include every thing that God has either teſtified or promiſed—things paſt and preſent, as well as things to come. So that both the words *confidence* and *conviction*, according to this view, are expreſſive of ſimple *belief*; and the object of this belief is the truth, whether teſtified or promiſed.—See *M'Lean's Treatiſe on the Apoſtolic Commiſſion*, *p.* 81. See alſo *a little piece, entitled*, "*The Belief of the Goſpel ſaving Faith*," *by the ſame author*, *p.* 5, 6.—Ed.

† The author explains the apoſtle's definition of faith thus: "Now faith is *the truth believed*, and *the belief of the truth*." That the word *faith* is uſed in ſcripture in a metonymical ſenſe, *i. e.* as importing *the truth to be believed*, muſt be very evident to an attentive reader, Acts vi. 7. chap. xxiv. 24. Gal. i. 23. Philip i. 27. Jude, verſe 3. Rev. ii. 13. &c. And that its general acceptation is the *belief* of the truth, is equally clear, and probably will not be denied by any; ſo that whatever may be the true meaning of *this paſſage*, Mr. Ecking's ideas are well ſupported by the ſcriptures, and the doctrines he has advanced in the remainder of the ſection, will remain unaffected by any criticiſms upon it.

It

of the God of intelligence! We read nothing here of the direct, or the reflex acts, nor of making a falſehood truth, by confidently believing it. Here is nothing ſaid of the perſonal appropriating act, neither is faith and its effects confounded.—But I ſhall proceed to conſider a little more particularly, this truly excellent definition of the faith of God's elect, which the inſpired apoſtle has with plainneſs and clearneſs laid before all men.

Firſt: *Faith is the ſubſtance of things hoped for.* The Bible exhibits one harmonious, conſiſtent, beautiful ſyſtem of truth. The whole of which, in all its glorious parts, is only a tranſcript or copy of what was drawn out in the character of Jeſus Chriſt: ſo that the truth as it is in him, or the doctrine of Chriſt in the ſcriptures, of which many ſummaries are given, contains the *ſum* or *ſubſtance* of the whole compaſs of evangelical truth; and the hope which is laid up for the ſaints in heaven, is heard of in the word of the truth of the goſpel, Col. i. 5. which is the ſubſtance of what things they expect hereafter, or the ſubſtantial foundation of their hope. Faith then, in the firſt part of the definition under conſideration, evidently intends the *things* to be believed: and that the term is often uſed in this ſenſe, in things human and divine, will appear by having reference to a few inſtances. Laws and treaties made and confirmed, betwixt one nation and another, are called the faith of thoſe nations. To preſerve them inviolably is called keeping the faith; and for either party to recede from, or break

It may not be improper however to obſerve, that in illuſtrating the ſecond part of his definition of faith, he has gone into a ſlight inconſiſtency, and has departed from the idea with which he ſet out; for he has made *the evidence of things not ſeen*, to conſiſt in *the truth to be believed*, and not in our *belief* thereof. So that, although he at firſt explains the word in a double ſenſe, yet he has for the moſt part, as the reader may perceive, adhered to one idea.—Ed.

break, any of them, is called a breach of faith; and theſe laws, treaties, &c. are the ſubſtantial ground of hope and confidence to each nation. When a perſon has declared his ſentiments upon any point, thoſe things that he has teſtified of are properly called his creed, or his faith: and it is become very common to denominate ſuch a declaration, *a confeſſion of faith.* If the perſon profeſſes his hope of ſalvation in the things he has held forth, then it is plain, that his faith is the ſubſtance of his hope; and the nature of his hope will be as his faith is. The term is frequently uſed in the Bible in this ſenſe, as Rom. iii. 3. *Shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect?* Gal. i. 23 *The faith which he once deſtroyed*; and what the apoſtle preached was *Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified.* In this ſenſe it is uſed Gal. iii. 2. 5. 12. 23. 25. and nothing but the doctrines of Chriſt, which, by the writings of the prophets and apoſtles, were delivered to them, could be intended when Jude, verſe 3. exhorts to *contend earneſtly for the faith once delivered to the ſaints.*

Calvin, in his Inſtit. b. 3. chap. 2. § 13. obſerves, that "Oftentimes faith ſignifies the ſound doctrine of religion, as in the place that we now alledge (1 Tim. i. 5.) And in the ſame epiſtle Paul will have the deacons to *hold faſt the myſtery of the faith in a pure conſcience.* Again, when he publiſhed the falling away of certain from the faith. But on the other ſide he ſaith, Timothy was nouriſhed up with the *words of faith.* Again, where he ſaith that profane vanities and oppoſitions, falſely named ſciences, are the cauſe that many depart from the faith: whom in another place he calleth reprobate touching faith. As again he chargeth Titus, ſaying, warn them *that they may be ſound in the faith.* [By ſoundneſs he meaneth nothing elſe but purity of doctrine, which is eaſily corrupted

rupted, and brought out of kind by the lightneſs of men] Even becauſe in Chriſt, whom faith poſſeſſeth, are hidden all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge. Therefore faith is worthily extended to ſignify *the whole ſum of heavenly doctrine, from which it cannot be ſeparated.*" *

There are many things ſpoken of in the ſacred writings concerning faith, that muſt be underſtood in the above ſenſe. As firſt: our reſurrection from a death in treſpaſſes and ſins, Col. ii. 12. This cannot intend any act of the human mind, under any influence whatever, for *of his own will begat he us by the word of truth.* Faith in this ſenſe comes by hearing the word of God. But this ſhews how faith comes to us; not how we approach to it. Our ears are not previouſly diſpoſed to hearken: but the almighty voice of the Son of God goes forth and unſtops the deaf ears. Even as he once ſaid to one literally deaf, *Be opened.* And ſtraightway his ears were opened. But this ſentiment has been conſidered in the former Eſſay.

Again: it is faith taken in this ſenſe, that is the matter of *juſtification* before God, and in the ſinner's conſcience. No fact comes better eſtabliſhed in the word of God, than that the matter of a ſinner's juſtification is the righteouſneſs of Chriſt imputed. It is eſtabliſhed firm as Jehovah's throne; nor can the deepeſt ſubtilties of hell move it. Yet we are expreſsly ſaid to be juſtified *by faith*, Rom. v. 1. chap. iv. 3

* One would think that the greater part of thoſe who call themſelves *Calviniſts*, are ſhamefully deficient in knowing wherein Calvin's doctrine conſiſts; or ſhould we find them maintaining the notion of faith being in the heart before we underſtand, receive, or even hear the word of God? But it has happened to Calviniſm, as it has long been with Chriſtianity;—many are fond of the name, for the ſake of credit, reputation, and intereſt, who yet are as ignorant of the doctrine, and as far from following the practices of the firſt Chriſtians, as an idolatrous pagan.

iv. 3—9. and the divinity of men would teach us, though nothing can be more palpably abſurd and dangerous, that faith juſtifies us *as an inſtrument:* and many by acting faith, as an inſtrument to their juſtification, are inſenſibly led, upon many occaſions, to ſubſtitute theſe *acts of faith*, in the place of thoſe *divine acts* which wrought out the all-ſufficient righteouſneſs. But if it be faith, as an inſtrument, that Abraham is ſaid to be juſtified by, then it would ſeem that it is by the inſtrumentality of Abraham's faith that all his ſeed are juſtified! For it is the very ſame thing that juſtifies him and his children; ſee Rom. iv. 3—8. compared with verſes 22—25. To the ſame ſignification are the following ſcriptures: Rom. iii. 38. Gal. ii. 16. chap. iii 24. It is what the ſinner believes then, or the work of Chriſt alone, ſeparate from all its effects or fruits, that juſtifies. * It has been very common to uſe the phraſes "juſtifying faith," and "ſaving faith;" and it is to be hoped many uſe them, without connecting any erroneous ſentiment therewith. Yet it is plain others would be underſtood, that it is ſome peculiar *ſort* or *manner* of believing that juſtifies. But if the heartineſs, ſeriouſneſs, or ſincerity of our believing, have any influence whatever in our juſtification, it cannot be ſaid to be *freely by grace through the redemption which is in Jeſus.*

Further: Faith in the ſenſe under conſideration is what believers *live* by, according as it is written, *The juſt ſhall live by his faith.* Some are apt to imagine that the vigorous actings of the ſoul are here intended. Such live (ſuch a life as it is) by the workings of their own mind, which they call faith. But ſurely this

* Though the work of Chriſt alone is the meritorious ground of our juſtification, yet we muſt ever remember, that it is only he that *believeth*, that is juſtified by it.——Ed.

this is not the life of faith pointed to in the ſcripture; far otherwiſe. The ſoul that is ſpiritually quickened, lives a much nobler life than this. He lives by his faith it is true; but what is the believer's faith? undoubtedly Chriſt as he is revealed in the word. *He is our life*, Col. iii. 4. and, *This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am (ſays Chriſt) the living bread which came down from Heaven; if any man eat of this bread he ſhall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my fleſh which I will give for the life of the world.* He, therefore, who lives by any thing elſe, whether his frames, feelings, his ſuppoſed humble breathings, holineſs, ſweet ſenſations, &c. is in the eſtimation of him who cannot err, a dead ſinner. *Jeſus ſaid unto them, verily, verily I ſay unto you, except ye eat the fleſh of the ſon of man and drink his blood, ye have* NO LIFE IN YOU, John vi. 53.

Once more: under this part of the definition, we are to conceive of faith ſanctifying. Acts xxvi. 18. *Sanctified by faith which is in me.* Chap. xv. 9. *Purifying their hearts by faith.* Nothing elſe can be intended but the truth believed, according to our Lord's prayer, John xvii. 17. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.* Chap. xv. 3, *Now are ye clean thro' the word which I have ſpoken unto you*, 1 Cor. i. 30 Eph. v. 26. Thus the precious truth as it is in Jeſus, dwelling in the heart, produces every good diſpoſition, and prompts to every good work. It dwells in the underſtanding, and enlightens it. It poſſeſſeth the conſcience, and purges it from dead works. It prevails in the will, and diſpoſes it to pray, Father, thy will be done. It engages the affections, and regulates and influences them, and of courſe the outward converſation will be adorned with every good word

word and work. Such are the triumphs, and ſuch the correſpondent effects of divine truth in the ſoul.

The *ſecond* part therefore of the apoſtle's definition of faith, leads us to conceive of it as *The evidence of things not ſeen.* From hence it appears, that they who chuſe to define faith—a believing, without evidence from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, differ eſſentially from the apoſtle. Paul held no ſuch crude notions. As a man of good ſenſe, as a pupil of Gamaliel; and as a diſciple of the Holy Ghoſt; he knew the abſurdity of propoſing any thing to be believed, without *evidence* of its exiſtence and reality.

Equally abſurd is their notion who, in order to appear more than ordinarily accurate, cenſure and ſolemnly condemn the idea of believing being an act of the mind. It is acknowledged, indeed, that very unſcriptural ſentiments have prevailed about *acts of faith*, when they are ſuppoſed to ariſe from ſome previous principle, well diſpoſing the mind of unbelievers towards the goſpel. Yet, if it be admitted poſſible for the ſoul of man to *act* (and who will deny that it does?) there is nothing more properly an *act* of the mind, than believing a truth; in which firſt the mind perceives it, then conſiders the evidence offered to ſupport it; and finally gives aſſent to it. And can this comport with inactivity? We muſt either ſay then, that the ſoul *acts* in believing the goſpel; or that the ſoul is an inactive ſpirit, which is abſurd.

No inquiries are of greater importance in treating upon faith than, *What is truth?* and, upon what *kind* of evidence is the truth to be received? In regard to the firſt, Chriſt ſays, I AM THE TRUTH. And what he means by that, the New Teſtament is intended to illuſtrate; which has been conſidered in the former eſſay. As to the evidence upon which the truth is to be received, it might be obſerved in ge-

neral, that evidence ſhould always be of the ſame nature with what is propoſed to be believed. Are we to receive the goſpel, becauſe, or juſt as far as, it is agreeable to reaſon? No; for then reaſon would be ſet up to inform us what God *ought* to ſay. And as what is called reaſon, wears an evil eye to the truth, it is not to be ſuppoſed that we can receive it in the love of it, upon this evidence. Are we then from ſome impreſſions upon the mind which are thought to be the convictions of the Holy Spirit? No; for then we ſhould receive nothing from God, but what in *ſome certain way* or other we feel impreſſed upon our minds. However, many find it *convenient* to believe upon this kind of evidence; becauſe then they can chuſe what part of the word of God they like beſt, and readily avoid what is diſagreeable to them, or is likely to injure their reputation among profeſſors, and hurt their worldly intereſt. Are we upon the evidence, that the fathers, the church, the wiſe and learned, or the great and pious have produced? No; for then we ſhould acknowledge maſters upon earth, contrary to Chriſt's command: neither would this be hearing his voice, but the voice of the learned, the pious, &c. and would at beſt, be but "*human faith.*" Are we to receive the truth, upon the force of a philoſophical argument, or a mathematical, or logical demonſtration? By no means: for this kind of evidence is unſuitable to the nature of the teſtimony, which is not written in the words of man's wiſdom.

The truth to be believed being *divine*, the evidence upon which it is received muſt be of the ſame nature. And *the goſpel has its moſt proper evidence in itſelf.* The majeſty which clothes the ſacred pages evidently declares, that God himſelf ſpeaks there. When the Spirit of truth opens the underſtanding, by the entrance of the word, to underſtand and know the truth

truth as it is in Jeſus, the light, power, and evidence thereof produces a confidence in the ſame. We believe and are ſure, becauſe the faithful and true witneſs has ſpoken it, 1 John, v. 10. and this certainty of ſoul, grounded upon unchanging veracity, is the evidence of things not ſeen. However, as our knowledge of the goſpel admits of degrees, ſo our faith may be denominated weak or ſtrong, and we be ſtiled, agreeably thereunto, babes, young men, or fathers in Chriſt. Believing then, whether the things believed are human or divine, is nothing more than a conviction of ſoul, that thoſe things are true. This conviction is nothing more than the force of ſatisfactory evidence. And this evidence, in the goſpel, is in the things believed.

It has rather inconſiderately been ſaid by ſome, that what we underſtand we cannot help believing: for this is not literally true. Two perſons may equally underſtand the nature of a propoſition, while the one receives it as true, and the other rejects it as falſe. I may clearly underſtand the error of my friend; but does it follow that I cannot help believing it? Yet it certainly is impoſſible, that we ſhould underſtand a propoſition to be *true*, and not believe it, whether the nature of the thing be agreeable or diſpleaſing.—When it is ſaid all faith ſuppoſes evidence, it is not to be underſtood, that every thing ſpoken of in the ſcripture is to be comprehended in all its parts, powers, and qualities, in an *abſolute ſenſe* before we believe it; or that we ſhould reject what we cannot fathom. For then we muſt not only diſbelieve that there is a God, but alſo every thing that neceſſarily belongs to him; yea, and ten thouſand things in nature beſides. We believe that God IS; but HOW he exiſts, our underſtandings were not framed to conceive, nor are we called to believe. So there is ſufficient evidence, both

human and divine, that the ſcriptures are the word of God, though many ſacred truths are only known in their nature and extent, to him who ſearches the deep things of God; for even Paul himſelf, in the view of them, not being able to explore, cries out, *O the depth!* Yet it ſhould be obſerved that, He who is perfectly *wiſe*, and cannot be deceived; *faithful* and *good*, and will not deceive his creatures, has revealed nothing but what is worthy of himſelf. He does not bind his intelligent creatures to believe real inconſiſtencies; for though the ſublime truths are above human reaſon, they are not inconſiſtent with it.

But what evidence have we in the *true ſayings of God*, of that which man believes for his ſalvation?

Firſt: there is evidence of the *ſufficiency* of Chriſt's work to ſave to the UTTERMOST, the moſt guilty, the moſt polluted, and the moſt abandoned wretch on this ſide hell. This pleaſing fact is confirmed in the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, wherein the infinite dignity of his perſon, obedience, and ſacrifice, is demonſtrated: for the declared import of this is, *That repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem.* No perſon that calls this in queſtion belives the goſpel: yet every one does this, who diſbelieves the ſufficiency of the atonement to ſave *him*. Again: there is evidence of the *freeneſs* of this ſalvation. The report of it is ſpread amongſt *all* nations, and directed to *all ſorts* of perſons without diſtinction. All its bleſſings are to be partaken of *freely*, as the beſtowment of ſovereign grace to the guilty ſinner, *as ſuch*. So that the rude Barbarian, and the ſavage Scythian, have an equal right to partake of this ſalvation, with the Jew, the polite Greek, or the moſt decent Moraliſt. And when the evidence of the goſpel ſtrikes the mind, when a ſinner is once convinced of the veracity

racity of God—that the ſcriptures are his word—and that ſinners *as ſuch* are invited to partake of the benefits of grace freely; he will need nothing more to convince and ſatisfy his ſoul, and cauſe him to believe on the name of the Son of God. He will not wait for any new revelation or aſſurance that God ſpeaks to *him*; nor will he go about to *make* this true by believing it; what is written ſufficiently ſatisfies him that *he* is not excluded. But if the indefinite extent of the goſpel report be denied (and this every one denies who excludes himſelf) the truth is called in queſtion, and the common ſalvation is diſbelieved.

Further: there is ſufficient evidence in the diſpenſation of grace, that God in the diſtribution of his favours is juſt and merciful in perfection—that in the grand exhibition of mercy, through the obedience and atonement of Chriſt, his law is fulfilled, honoured, magnified, and eſtabliſhed as holy, juſt, and good—ſin is demonſtrated to be an infinite evil—juſtice, in all its tremendous forms, a lovely attribute of Deity; and all his ways are founded in righteouſneſs, holineſs, and truth. To believe a goſpel that does not ſet forth theſe things, is to believe a lie; and to manifeſt enmity againſt this goſpel of the kingdom, is a full proof that ſuch are *alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them.* But to believe the truth, in its glorious connection, is the ſovereign gift of heaven; thoſe on whom it is beſtowed, will not be heard ſaying, "My ſins are too great to be pardoned," becauſe they believe upon unchanging authority, that the blood of Jeſus Chriſt cleanſeth from *all* ſin. Nor will they be diſtreſſed for want of ſomething as a pre-requiſite, to diſtinguiſh them from the profane world, becauſe they are perſuaded that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave the CHIEF of ſinners. Nor will they be perplexing themſelves with

fruitleſs fears, leſt they ſhould not be elected, becauſe they know and believe that he is faithful and true who hath ſaid, that *Whoſoever believeth in him ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting life.*

The believing view of this ſalvation, or rather *The truth in the love of it*, dwelling in us, begets every evangelical motion of heart towards God in Chriſt. It leads to love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity—to receive him as the free gift of God—to truſt in him as the ſure mercies of David, and, in a way of meditation and prayer, daily to be coming to him as unto a living ſtone. But the neceſſary fruits and happy effects of faith will be conſidered in the next eſſay. Here I only add by way of ſummary, that the faith which is *like precious* with that of all the apoſtles, has for its immediate object, *The righteouſneſs of our God and Saviour*, 2 Peter i. 1—for its ground and foundation *The teſtimony of God*, 1 Theſ. ii. 13. is obtained through divine teaching, as the ſovereign *gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. Phil. i. 29—its peculiar effects are *Joy and peace*, 1 Peter i. 8—and its genuine evidence is *good works*, James ii. 14—26.

SECTION III.

Wherein are conſidered ſome QUESTIONS *which may ariſe, and* OBJECTIONS *that may be ſtarted, upon the foregoing* VIEW of FAITH.

TO the ſcripture account of ſalvation by faith, it has been objected, that, "This is a very eaſy way of going to heaven: nothing more eaſy than to believe. And if believing will take us to heaven, the greater part of mankind are going there." The objector,

jector, it would ſeem, has no other notion of the way to heaven than by *doing ſome great thing*. And it muſt be acknowledged that nothing can be more NATURAL. However the objector is *one* inſtance, eaſy as this way may ſeem, that *all* do not believe the goſpel, or expect to be ſaved through the righteouſneſs of Jeſus. Inſtead of *all* men believing the goſpel, it is but too manifeſt that *very few* in reality do: and that "the greater part of mankind" ſlight the goſpel way of ſalvation as weak and fooliſh (among whom our objector muſt be ranked) or elſe think nothing at all about it: while others, profeſſing that they know God, in works deny him, and turn the grace of God into wantonneſs. And there are not wanting others, who, while they profeſs to be ſaved by Chriſt, either in plain or more ambiguous terms and ways, eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs. But can it be ſtrictly ſaid that either of theſe claſſes believe that very goſpel which Chriſt and his apoſtles preached? Rather, is it not manifeſt that they are ſporting themſelves with their own deceivings, and that, if ſovereign mercy does not prevent, by giving them to underſtand and know the Lord, they will periſh in their deluſions. It is readily acknowledged that many will *ſay* they "Believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jeſus Chriſt his only Son our Lord," &c. when in truth they do not believe *it*, but ſome falſe repreſentation thereof which the god of this world has impreſſed upon their mind, to blind them, leſt the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of God, ſhould ſhine into them. It has been juſtly obſerved, that *moſt men*, who live under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, do wofully deceive their own ſouls in this matter. They do *not believe* what they profeſs themſelves to believe, and what they think they believe. Men talk of fundamental errors; this is, to

me,

me, the moſt fundamental error that we can fall into. This miſtake is in the foundation, and ruins the ſouls of thoſe who die in it. Nothing is more common than for men to deceive themſelves in this point, ſelf-love, reputation among the religious, &c. make them reſt ſecure. Such will avoid the clear preaching of the truth, becauſe if ſome of its light break in, it diſcovers their error, and fills them with torment—alas for them, for they have found out a way to go quickly down into the pit!—But ſtill in whatever way it is ſuppoſed the objection has weight; it will remain a truth eſtabliſhed for ever, that, HE THAT BELIEVETH SHALL BE SAVED.

"But a perſon may have the cleareſt perception, and the moſt juſt views of the perſon and work of Chriſt in his *head*, who does not believe on him in his *heart*." It is acknowledged that all who profeſs to know the Lord, do not ſo in truth, John viii. 54; yet, *This is life eternal to know the true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent.* John xvii. 3. Such as know him are directed to glory only in this, Jer. ix. 24. and ſuch are in a bleſſed ſtate, Pſalm lxxxix. 15. As to the above notion, it needs no other confutation, than for every thinking perſon to make the experiment, upon any point of knowledge that he has obtained; and I am of opinion that the greateſt adepts in metaphyſical ſubtilties, will find themſelves puzzled to make out the diſtinction: though all will at once perceive that it is poſſible, yea, very common, for perſons to *ſay* that with their *mouths*, which they do not underſtand or believe in their *hearts*; and, without doubt, this is what Paul would lead our thoughts to, Rom. x. 10. The faith of the operation of God is very different from every other kind of faith, but that difference does not conſiſt in the *manner* of believing, but in the *nature* of the thing believed, and in

in the *evidence* which ſupports that belief; an hypocrite may have *feigned faith*, which from various motives, and to various ends, he may ſee it prudent to retain; and many *very ſincere* perſons, in their way, may have a *falſe faith*, by which they may deceive themſelves and others: that is, they may believe a falſehood, or hold wrong notions of the truth. But then if they are *ſincere*, it ſuppoſes that they believe it *with their hearts* to be true. There is no reaſon to doubt that there are many ſincere Papiſts, Arians, Socinians, &c. who believe *in their hearts* that the doctrines which they ſeverally profeſs, are true. Even as there were many *very ſincere* in their oppoſition to Chriſt in the days of his fleſh, and in the firſt preaching of the goſpel, Acts xxvi. 9. Would it not then be talking more intelligibly to ſay, that when a perſon's profeſſion is not productive of ſuitable fruits, it is plain he is not taught of God, and ſo does not know the truth *as it is in Jeſus*; than to make the above idle diſtinction, which is void of foundation either in ſcripture or common ſenſe? Eph. iv. 20—24. 2 Peter i. 8—10.

"But a perſon may believe the *doctrine* of Chriſt, who yet does not believe on the *perſon* of Chriſt." It is true when faith relates ſimply to the exiſtence of a perſon, the diſtinction is ever to be preſerved. Many believe there were ſuch perſons as Paul and James, who do not believe their doctrine. But this weighs on the contrary ſide to that on which the objection would place it, for it ſuppoſes a perſon may believe all that is written about Jeſus Chriſt, and yet not believe *on him* or *in him*. But Paul ſays, Rom. x. 14. 17. *And how ſhall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?—So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* And what can we know of Chriſt, or what benefit can we receive from him but by

by and through his word? It is not the arrangement of letters or words of ſcripture barely that we believe, but the mind and truth of God contained therein. There is no other uſe, therefore, for the diſtinction, than to entangle and perplex perſons, and to promote and cheriſh ſome kind of blind enthuſiaſm.

"But if faith is nothing more than a *ſimple belief of the truth*, it is only what devils believe: and can the faith of devils profit us?" Such an objection as this, coming from one whoſe perſon is held in admiration, will have much more influence upon the minds of his adherents (who without doubt hate every thing that they believe belongs to the devil) than ſound argument or poſitive ſcripture. Thoſe who, in attempting to anſwer this objection, have pleaded that the devils only believe that there is one God; not only leave the objection unanſwered, but certainly have very limited notions of their creed. The apoſtle James plainly ſhows that their faith, in ſome reſpects, is more orthodox than that of many profeſſors of religion, becauſe the faith of the former produces terror and dreadful horror, while that of the latter leads to preſumption, and awfully ſears the conſcience; nor have we any reaſon to believe otherwiſe, if ſcripture be our guide, than that devils believe every goſpel truth as firmly as the true believer does: and perhaps underſtand the nature of the truth much more extenſively But what does this avail *them?* Chriſt did not take upon him the nature of *devils*. He did not become ſurety for, and bear the ſins of, *devils*. Nor is it ſaid to them, to *you* is the word of this ſalvation ſent. No: unhappy creatures! they are, in awful ſovereignty, though in ſtrict juſtice, *reſerved in everlaſting chains under darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day*, Jude, ver. 6. So that though they believe and confeſs with Peter, that Jeſus is the Son of God,

Luke

Luke iv. 34. 41. Mark iii. 11. Yet they *hate* the truth, knowing that for this purpoſe he was manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the works of the devil, 1 John, 3. 8. Hence we find them crying out and ſaying, *Let us alone, what have* WE *to do with thee, thou Jeſus of Nazareth? Art thou come to deſtroy us? I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God*, Mark i. 24. But though the ſaving truth torments devils, it delivers ſinners of the *human race* from the wrath to come. The Son of God clothed himſelf in the human nature, and became the Surety of his people; and the language of Scripture is, *To you*, O MEN, *I call, and my voice is to the* SONS OF MEN. And whoſoever among men believes what devils do about the Son of God, is born of God, and ſhall be ſaved, 1 John v. 1. Nevertheleſs there are not wanting thoſe among the ſons of men, who make no better uſe of what they know about the goſpel than the devils do; and who, therefore, have no more benefit from it than they have. The devils know the truth well: but they hate it—make uſe of every artifice to corrupt and pervert it, and bring forth fruits directly oppoſite to it. The Phariſees ſaw ſo much of the truth, as to hate it, ſpeak evil of it, and ſeek to take Chriſt's life away, for bearing witneſs to it, and hereby manifeſted themſelves to be the children of the devil, John viii. 40. 44. And many in our day agree with devils, to hate and pervert the truth, and perſecute them that are of it; having ſeen ſo much of it as to be aware, that it does not ſuit their ſcheme of religion. Let us remember, then, that the faith of devils is this; to know ſo much of the truth as to join with them to hate and corrupt it; while the ſame truth, known in its beautiful connection, believed in its native ſimplicity, and therefore received in the love of it, will ſave the ſoul, and promote a godly converſation. And it will

appear

appear plain to every one, who duly conſiders what the apoſtle James ſays, that he does not diſtinguiſh the faith of the operation of God, from the faith of devils, by the *nature* of the thing believed, but by its *fruits*; he plainly intimates, that if we ſeparate *love and good works* from faith, as its certain and neceſſary concomitants, the devils are as ORTHODOX as the moſt critical profeſſor, James ii. 18. 20. chap. i. 22. 27.

"But did not Simon Magus believe, who yet was a bad man?" True: but *what* did he believe? Is it replied, He believed the doctrine of Philip? without doubt he did in the ſenſe in which he underſtood it. But who will ſay that he really *underſtood* the preaching of Philip? If then he did not underſtand that very goſpel which was preached, but held it in a corrupt ſenſe under a form of ſound words, he cannot, with any degree of propriety, be ſaid to have believed the goſpel of Chriſt: for what we have no underſtanding of, we cannot believe, John ix. 35, 36. But that he did believe in *ſome ſenſe* is true, becauſe the word aſſerts it, and it is very plain wherein his miſtake lay. He had not received the evidence of the *freeneſs* of ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt, and was ignorant of the ſovereign manner in which the bleſſings of it are beſtowed. For he thought that the gift of the Holy Ghoſt might be purchaſed with money, Acts viii. 18—24. He wondered, like ſome profeſſors now, at the diſcoveries which he had made, or the wonders which he beheld the apoſtles work, but did not underſtand the true grace of God. Their faith, therefore, ſhould be claſſed with his, who think by their *doings*, or on the account of their ſincere, earneſt, motions of heart, &c. they are qualified for Chriſt, and ſo through the medium of theſe things *hope* for his mercy.

"But

"But is there not ſuch a thing as believing in vain?" 1 Cor. xv. 2. Yes:* and to believe in vain is to believe ſomething that is not true, and which therefore deceives us; to hold ſome error along with the truth, which tends to deſtroy its nature. As for inſtance. Thoſe to whom the apoſtle wrote, believed that Chriſt was riſen from the dead; and yet denied that there would be a reſurrection of the juſt and of the unjuſt: and thereby overthrew the faith of ſome. The apoſtle ſhows that if this ſentiment be true, that the dead riſe not, the doctrine of Chriſt's reſurrection muſt of conſequence fall; and ſo, their preaching would be vain, and the Corinthian's faith would be vain, and they would be yet in their ſins, 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14. Again: If we believe that ſalvation from ſin and hell comes *only* by the death of Chriſt, and yet maintain that we obtain righteouſneſs by our legal works, or become qualified for Chriſt by virtue of any thing exerted by us, or wrought in us, under any name or pretence whatever; it is plain that we have believed in vain. For if righteouſneſs come by the law, or if we can by any means ſhorten the diſtance betwixt God and us, and ſo begin to return to him—the great difficulty is over; we may eaſily proceed on our way; but in that caſe Chriſt has died in vain, and, of conſequence, our faith in him is a vain thing.

"But is it not ſaid that ſome believe only for a time?" Mat. xiii. 20, 21. True: and where ſhall we ſay their faith was defective, for that there was ſome fatal defect is manifeſt. But ſurely it was not in the *manner* of their believing; for there appears to

* There is no ſuch thing as believing the *goſpel* in vain, unleſs it can be ſhown that it is not true, or that Chriſt is not riſen. It is only upon that ſuppoſition the Apoſtle ſpeaks of believing in vain.—Ed.

have been *approbation* of their idea of the goſpel—*delight* in it, and *dependance* upon it. And, in the appearance of things, they deſerved to have been received, as thoſe who had obtained *like precious faith* with the apoſtles. Yet, as before hinted, ſome where or other a miſtake was made, which, like a canker worm, at length eat away their zealous profeſſion. Where then did this latent evil lie? Chriſt condeſcends to inform us; and therein points out a real difference between true faith, and its moſt ſubtle counterfeits that can poſſibly exiſt. *He that receiveth the ſeed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and* UNDERSTANDETH *it, which alſo heareth fruit and bringeth forth ſome an hundred fold, ſome ſixty, ſome thirty.* v. 2, 3. while the reſt UNDERSTOOD it not, v. 19. On this account Jeſus frequently inquires of his diſciples, *Have ye underſtood theſe things?* After all the labored definitions and nice diſtinctions, that have been given to diſtinguiſh a true faith from a falſe one, it appears from infallible truth, that the reaſon why any draw back to perdition, after many fair and flouriſhing appearances, is, becauſe that under their profeſſion they entertain ſome miſtaken notions of the truth, and join ſomewhat of their own to it: ſo that though they may frequent the ordinances, talk in feeling ſtrains about their experiences, and profeſs much regard to many of Chriſt's ſayings; yet ſome pernicious falſehood, lying at the root of their profeſſion, they endure but for a while. But we ought not to have ſuſpicion of this being the caſe with any, while they continue in a true profeſſion of Chriſt, or while they apparently abide in him, and bring forth fruit. The example ſeems to have been recorded in order to prevent any, when they ſee theſe draw back, from ſuppoſing that true faith might be loſt, 1 John ii. 19. And to lead

each

each profeſſor to examine what kind of *faith* he holds, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. But when we perceive perſons ſwerving from the form of ſound words—courting the favour of the world to avoid the croſs—declining in good works, and falling into enthuſiaſtic fancies, or immoralities, we have ſufficient ground to ſuſpect, they have no root in themſelves, and are withering away, 2 Peter ii. 1, 20, 21, 22, Heb. vi. 4—6, chap. x. 26, 27, 38. There are various inſtances of perſons making clear a profeſſion of the truth as *words* can well expreſs, who yet (as is the caſe with the Antinomians) do not underſtand that the Lord is a jealous God—that his holy law, ſo far from being aboliſhed by the goſpel, is honoured and magnified by the Surety's obedience, and eſtabliſhed as a rule of duty to them* ; and it is to be feared that the principal reaſon, why ſome cavil at the law being a rule of conduct to believers, is, becauſe it forbids and condemns what their carnal appetites approve. The clearneſs of the profeſſion—the uprightneſs of the converſation—obedience to Chriſt, and enduring therein unto the end—are the ſcripture criterions of true faith.

"Is it the *duty* of *all* who hear the goſpel to believe it?" If the intention of this inquiry be, ought every hearer of the goſpel to believe that he is elected—that Chriſt ſhed his blood for him in particular, or that he ſhall certainly go to heaven? we muſt reply in the negative; becauſe theſe things are not true of all. So that if it were the duty of all to believe them, it would be their duty to believe the moſt palpable falſehoods. If the deſign of the queſtion be to know whether the belief of the goſpel is enjoined upon us, and recommended to us as the law is, viz. *That the*

* See the Death of Legal Hope, the Life of Evangelical Obedience, by Mr. A. Booth, p. 130—160.

man that doth theſe things ſhall live; it muſt be anſwered, No: for if any exertions of body or mind are required to that end, Chriſt has died in vain. But if the inquiry be, whether it is the duty of every hearer of the goſpel, to believe the record that God has given of his Son; that he is well pleaſed in him, and gives eternal life to as many as believe in his name—that he is the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth, and that there is redemption in his blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſins according to the riches of his grace, for thoſe who are inexcuſably criminal?—it is moſt certainly every one's *duty*, who hears theſe things, to believe them, and that for the following reaſons:

(1ſt) There is nothing in the goſpel meſſage, but what men are *capable* of believing and obſerving, *if they chooſe it*. As there is nothing which men more tenaciouſly retain, than a good opinion of their own diſpoſition to do well, if they were diſentangled from certain unfavourable circumſtances, &c. ſo their deficiencies are generally attributed to the want of power or ability; which ultimately throws the blame upon God, and makes him the author of ſin. If the Lord required that of us which is *naturally* impoſſible to be performed, however willing we might be to the ſervice, the caſe would be hard indeed with us! But is this the caſe? far be ſuch a thought from us: far be ſuch a thing from the Judge of all the earth. The ſcripture plainly ſhows, that *naturally* man is as *able* as he is *willing*, to do the will of God. There is no *natural inability* in man to believe the goſpel, otherwiſe it would not be criminal in him to reject it; any more than it is ſin in the deaf not to hear, or in the blind not to ſee, or in the lame not to walk. If a defect in the natural capacities were criminal, then the more ignorant part of mankind would be the greateſt ſinners;

ners; and they who had an aſſemblage of brilliant parts, would be the higheſt ſaints. But then it is urged that the ſcripture repreſents man as utterly unable to underſtand, receive, or delight in, the goſpel. As that *no man* CAN *come unto me*, John vi. 44. The world CANNOT receive. John xiv. 17. ch. viii. 43. Rom. viii. 7. All this, and whatever elſe can be urged of the ſame nature, is admitted. But then, moſt certainly, this *neceſſity* is nothing more than DISINCLINATION. There is no lack of natural abilities *; ſinners can love, delight in, and practiſe ſin; and if they WOULD—if they had not a prevailing inclination to the contrary—a deep-rooted enmity to God, there is nothing that would hinder them from loving him, and obeying the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. But unbelief and diſobedience ſuit their inclinations better; and men, as free agents, chooſe what is moſt agreeable to them. So that the unbelieving and diſobedient are not *compelled*, by ſome extrinſic neceſſity, to follow their pernicious and deſtructive courſes; but they do it by voluntary choice, as that which is moſt agreeable, and ſeems moſt convenient to them. Hence Jer. xliv. 16. We *will not* hearken unto thee. Pſal. lxxxi. 11. But my people *would not* hearken to my voice. Job xxii. 17. Mat. xxiii. 37. John v. 40. To repent and believe, to love and obey, therefore, cannot be what men *would* do, but *cannot*; for the natural man, if he would ſpeak out the language of his ſoul, its meaning would be this, "I have no inclination to love God and keep his commandments. The luſts of the fleſh, the luſts of the eye, and the

* Such expreſſions are liable to be miſunderſtood by thoſe who know not the diſtinction of *natural* and *moral* abilities. The author, while he affirms that men are poſſeſſed of the former, admits that they are deſtitute of the latter.—Ed.

pride of life, ſuit my inclination better, and them I freely chuſe, voluntarily indulge, and delight in.

2dly. If it be not the duty of every one who hears the goſpel to believe it, unbelief cannot be their ſin. But unbelief is deemed a ſin, ſo enormous in its own nature, and ſo diſhonouring to God in its conſequences, that condemnation is paſſed upon it in the divine word, John iii. 18. 36. It muſt therefore be their duty to believe the goſpel. If it be not the duty of all who hear the truth preached, to believe and receive ſo glorious a revelation of God's love, then it can be no crime to break the firſt and great commandment. But nothing is more plain in ſcripture, than that every intelligent creature is under infinite obligations, to love the Lord with all his heart. To diſbelieve and reject the goſpel muſt therefore be an evil; and if it be an infinite evil to diſobey and reject the truth, and have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs, then of courſe we are under infinite obligations to believe. If we are not bound in duty to believe the goſpel, are we under any obligation to believe *any part* of God's word? If we are, what part? if not, then we are under no obligation at all to obſerve any one thing that is commanded therein—Deiſm, of conſequence, is no crime, and Chriſtianity a mere farce!

3dly. To believe the goſpel is the *commandment* of the everlaſting God, 1 John iii. 23. Rom. xvi. 25, 26. John xii. 50. Mark i. 15. And if the command, exhortation, and invitation of God, do not bind the conſcience, and enforce obedience, what does? *

Since

* "It may juſtly be wondered at," ſays Mr. Mc. Lean, "that any who profeſs to admit the truth of the goſpel itſelf, ſhould ever ſo much as entertain the leaſt doubt, that it is *the duty* of men to believe it. Yet ſtrange as it may ſeem, multitudes of profeſſors at this day ſtrenuouſly deny this. The ſentiment is grounded upon a complication

Since, therefore, it is nothing but man's own DISINCLINATION, that prevents his believing; ſince unbelief is a ſin deſerving damnation; and ſince it is the commandment of the everlaſting God, that men ſhould repent and believe the goſpel; it follows of courſe, that to believe the goſpel muſt be the duty of every perſon who hears it. This then, I hope, being ſettled,

complication of errors, reſpecting the extent of men's obligations, the nature of their inability, the nature of divine grace, the ſpirit's work, the goſpel, faith, &c. But the error itſelf is very dangerous, as it is of a practical tendency, and ſerves to harden men in impenitency and rejection of the goſpel."

Mr. MARTIN, in a late publication againſt Mr. Fuller, entitled "*Thoughts on the Duty of Man, relative to Faith in Jeſus Chriſt*," appears vehemently to oppoſe the doctrine of *true faith* being a *duty*, and goes into much trifling altercation upon the ſubject. His general notion of *duty* is "an *endeavour* to do the will of God, by divine aſſiſtance." He denies the fact, that "*there is nothing in the goſpel meſſage, but what men are capable of believing and obſerving*, IF THEY CHOOSE IT." It remains therefore with him to get over the concluſions which Mr. Ecking has here drawn from that principle. To the argument, that "*if it be not the duty of every one who hears the goſpel, to believe it; unbelief cannot be their ſin*;"—His reply is very unſatisfactory, and clearly evidences his inability to anſwer it. And laſtly, in noticing the argument, that "*it is the command of the everlaſting God to believe the goſpel*," he has recourſe to his general principle of duty, viz. that they ſhould *endeavour* to do this by divine aſſiſtance. Admitting his doctrine to be true, the inference ſeems juſt, that nothing pertaining to religion can be the *duty* of any man to whom God does not grant ſupernatural aſſiſtance. It alſo leads us to think, that *juſtification* is to be obtained by divine aſſiſtance, ſeconding *our own endeavours*. Theſe few hints may ſerve to ſhew the reader, how much *that ſyſtem* needs to be rectified, which leads to ſuch concluſions.

Mr. S. BARNARD, of Hull, has lately made a feeble attempt alſo upon the ſame ſide of the queſtion, in a diſcourſe which he has publiſhed on "*The Faith of the Operation of God.*" He denies that *true faith* is a *duty* required of thoſe who hear the goſpel; and in treating upon this ſubject, appears to have an eye to what Mr. Ecking has above advanced (if he has not quoted his words) and which he attempts to refute. The reader may ſee his diſcourſe animadverted upon, and very ably refuted, by Mr. Mc. Lean, in a little tract juſt publiſhed, entitled, "*The Belief of the Goſpel Saving Faith*," being the ſubſtance of two diſcourſes preached at Hull, &c. &c.—Ed.

ſettled, I conclude this ſection with a few obſervations on the following queſtion:—"What are we to underſtand by the aſſurance, and the full aſſurance of faith?" It has in general been taken for a confidence of perſonal intereſt in Chriſt; but this goes upon the ſuppoſition that faith is a perſuaſion that Chriſt loved me, and gave himſelf for me in particular; which, as hath been ſhown, is not the faith of the goſpel. Numbers have arrived at the full aſſurance of their election, &c. who yet have not obtained like precious faith with the apoſtles; and whoſe aſſurance therefore is built upon a falſe foundation, and is nothing better than ſelf-conceit and ſad deluſion. The faith of the operation of God is believing the record, teſtimony, witneſs, or evidence, that God has given of his Son, 1 John v. 9. 13. John iii. 33. Heb. xi. 1. The full aſſurance of faith, then, muſt be a more enlarged acquaintance with, and confidence in, *The truth as it is in Jeſus*, Rom. iv. 19, 20. Luke i. 1. John vi. 69. Heb. x. 22. This is promoted by growing up into all riches of the full aſſurance of underſtanding, Col. ii. 2. And as faith grows in proportion to the increaſe of our knowledge of the truth; ſo alſo, it becomes much confirmed, through the experimental enjoyment thereof: and as we grow up, unto all riches of the full aſſurance of underſtanding in the truth, and enjoy pleaſure in the bleſſed experience of it; ſo will our obedience prove, that our faith is not dead, and in this way we ſhall come to know our perſonal union with, and intereſt in, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. For when we can aſſert with the apoſtle Paul, *I am crucified with Chriſt: nevertheleſs, I live: yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God* (we may with great propriety add) *who loved me and gave himſelf for me.*

ESSAY

ESSAY III.

ON EXPERIENCE.

INTRODUCTION.

CHRISTIANITY is far from conſiſting in mere ſpeculation: it has immediately to do with the underſtanding, will, conſcience, affections, and converſation. So that no perſon can have any ſubſtantial proof that he *is* a believer, unleſs he enjoys, in ſome meaſure, the inward, powerful experience, of thoſe truths that he profeſſes to believe, as their genuine and neceſſary effects. Of all errors, therefore, in a profeſſion of Chriſtianity, *that* is the moſt dangerous in its conſequences, which ſuppoſes a perſon may underſtand, believe, and truſt in the goſpel of Chriſt, and yet have no experience of the reality and efficacy of it. This ſurely is to have a form of godlineſs, while the power thereof is practically denied.

But the many abounding errors about the nature of goſpel experience, and the uſe that ſhould be made of it, warn us to proceed cautiouſly in our inquiries about it. "A vaſt deal of what, now-a-days, goes by the name of Chriſtian experience, is very deluſive, conſiſting of whims, flights, and raptures, engendered by the warmth of animal paſſions, without one ſpark of grace. Accordingly, we have often ſeen theſe vain-glorious boaſters, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, bluſter for a time, and then vaniſh into emptineſs." Yet vain and deluſive as theſe imagina-

tions

tions are, it is but too manifeſt that many, who paſs for orthodox Chriſtians in our day, have no better a reaſon of their hope, than "Thus I have been affected, &c. and therefore I hope." Whence concluſions are drawn juſt as fancy dictates.

Here it will not be amiſs, briefly to glance at the true cauſe of the various miſtakes about religion in general, and experience in particular. We are taught in the word of God, that while man retained his original rectitude, he beheld his Maker's glory in the works of creation; and worſhipped him with purity of affection, as far as God had made himſelf manifeſt in thoſe viſible objects. Moreover, man was framed to hear his Sovereign's voice, and obey it; and that he might know, that his happineſs depended upon his hearing and obeying the word of God; that to obey was life, and to tranſgreſs, death; a teſt of his loyalty and dependance was given him, when he was placed in Paradiſe, Gen. ii. 16, 17. His underſtanding being clear, his will under ſubjection to the divine word, and his affections pure; his enjoyment, or experience of what he knew and believed, was a pure ſtream of felicity, flowing from the fountain of happineſs itſelf. But *human nature* being corrupted by the poiſon of the ſerpent, that firſt apoſtate from holineſs, being infuſed into it, man became vain, fooliſh, and diſobedient. That *human nature* is corrupted, I take for granted, rather than ſet myſelf formally to prove: not for want of evidence to demonſtrate the awful fact, but becauſe it is too ſtubbornly ſupported by ſcripture and experience, to be denied with any tolerable ſhow of truth; and notwithſtanding ſome may find themſelves diſpoſed to maintain *the dignity of human nature*, by ſubſtituting the flowers of rhetoric, or mere romance, in the place of evidence; the ſtreams will indubitably prove the true qualities of the fountain, Mark vii. 20. 23. Man's

Man's ſafety and happineſs lay in his dependance on, and obedience to, the *word* of his Maker; and therefore, the ſeducer's grand aim was to draw him off from that; which we find he went about to do, by repreſenting to him, that God withheld ſomething from him, which if enjoyed would greatly add to his felicity; and to gild the fatal ſnare, perverted the divine word; which ſcheme but too well anſwered his deſign. Hereby he robbed man of the principle of truth, and ſo of the divine image, and of courſe of his ſafety and happineſs. The falſe doctrines of Satan, *ye ſhall not ſurely die*, and *ye ſhall be as gods*, having entered into and corrupted the mind, the enemy thereby drew his own hateful image, conſiſting of pride, enmity, and deceit, upon him. This is the ſad ſource of all that irregularity, both in the powers of body and mind, that daily experience manifeſts, and of all that atheiſm, idolatry and ungodlineſs, which ſo awfully prevail in the world. In conſequence of this, it is become natural for man to ſin with hope of impunity, and to ſeek happineſs independent of God. If then we do but conſider, what principles man is naturally under the dominion of, if we but reflect that his underſtanding is *darkneſs*, through the ignorance that is in him, the will *enmity*, and every affection diſordered and defiled; and moreover, that man voluntarily gives up himſelf, to be led by the ſpirit of *error* and *ſelf-dependance*, we ſhall ſee the true cauſe of the various branches of idolatry, and ſhall be able to account for all that ſelf-flattery, ſelf-exaltation, and ſelf-confidence, which men are ſo prone to: nor ſhall we wonder, that the experience of many, under a profeſſion of religion, is legal, enthuſiaſtic, or even diabolical. The corruption of human nature, and the lead which the ſpirit of error takes in directing the mind in religious concerns, are the two grand ſources

of

of all error and deluſion. But it ſhould alſo be obſerved, that Satan, in all ages, has had his agents among men, who have induſtriouſly propagated his doctrinal tares, and thereby, while they have ſealed their own deſtruction, have promoted that of their fellow creatures. Such our Lord ſtiles *blind guides*, and *leaders of the blind*, and warns his diſciples to beware of them, becauſe their deluſions would be ſo ſtrong as to deceive, if it were poſſible, even the very elect. The apoſtles point them out (eſpecially in the Epiſtles of Peter and Jude, and alſo in the Revelations) as the worſt of enemies to mankind. We are informed that *many* would follow their pernicious ways, in conſequence of which, ſuch different ſorts of churches would be framed, from thoſe which were gathered by the influence of the apoſtles' doctrine, that they would be governed by different rules, and united by different principles, from what the firſt churches were. Such agree to give their power to the *beaſt*, and ſupport the kingdom of the *deſtroyer*: for, however ſhocking it might appear, there is ſcarce any thing in which people are ſo willing to deceive and be deceived, as in their eternal concerns! This the Lord by the prophet complains of, Jer. v. 30, 31. *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land, the prophets propheſy falſely, and the prieſts bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it ſo; and what will ye do in the end thereof?* This obſervation to perſons famous for a liberal way of thinking, may ſeem exceedingly uncharitable; but we have ſeen that he who can neither deceive nor be deceived, has declared that ſo it is. Nor was this *horrible thing* confined to Jeremiah's day: our Lord and his apoſtles, as above hinted, bid us expect ſuch things, even under the ſtricteſt pretenſions to Chriſtianity, and to guard againſt *the cunning craftineſs of men, who lie in wait*

to

to deceive, and who PRIVILY would bring in damnable hereſies, Eph. iv. 14. 2 Peter, ii. 1. But the Proteſtant reformed churches are ready to imagine that error, deception, &c. are confined to ROME, and ſome few *ſchiſmatics*; while Proteſtant diſſenters maintain that error and deluſion are inſeparable from national churches, the very *conſtitution* of them being antiſcriptural; and each party thinks every other ſect is tainted with heterodoxy but themſelves; when, alas! falſe joys, ariſing from falſe confidence, are but too manifeſtly among the various profeſſions of our day; which ſhould lead every man, in the firſt place, to ſuſpect *himſelf*, and then to look with a jealous eye on all making pretenſions to Chriſtianity about him. Yet there have gone forth ſuch abundant effuſions of the ſpirit of *catholic charity*, that nothing is deemed more rude, than to intimate the leaſt ſuſpicion of our neighbour's creed being ſound; and, therefore, nothing more generally cenſured than bigotry, party ſpirit, and a narrow way of thinking. But, ſtrange to tell, though undeniably true the fact, this ſame *catholic charity* has it in her nature (happy for the friends of Jeſus that it is not at preſent in her power) to perſecute unto ſtrange cities, and even unto death, thoſe who dare refuſe ſubſcription to her dogmas! Though the above repreſentations are nothing more than the ſcripture foretels, the writer of theſe Eſſays is far from thinking that every one who is in error, and rejoicing in a thing of nought, is intentionally ſtriving to deceive. Far be any ſuch thought from him. No: It is to be lamented that many ſincere perſons are ignorantly led aſtray; and even ſome who are born of God, in their infantile ſtate, may be in bondage to the rudiments of this world, *not knowing the depths of Satan*. There are alſo *degrees* in Chriſtian experience, even as there are in knowledge and faith: for

the path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day. Though it ſhould be carefully obſerved, that even the *new-born babe deſires the ſincere milk of the word*, that he may grow thereby; and ſo, the breathings of the heaven-born babe are *eſſentially* and *viſibly* different from the ſwelling imaginations of the fleſh, which are manifeſted in a certain kind of canting, whining, voluntary humility. In fine, the ſmalleſt degree of real goſpel experience is, in its nature, foundation, and effects, not only diſtinct from, but directly oppoſite to, that which goes under the borrowed name of Chriſtian-experience; but which, in fact, is nothing more than the fluctuation of the paſſions, generally ſet in motion by ſome enthuſiaſtic rant, and is without foundation either in ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon—a mere caſtle in the air!

SECTION I.

WHEREIN SOME KINDS OF DELUSIVE EXPERIENCES, AND THE USE MADE OF THEM, ARE LAID OPEN AND EXPOSED.

THE pleaſure and ſatisfaction perſons take, in reflecting upon the advances they have made towards the ports of bliſs, according to their reſpective ſchemes of religion, and the influence this has upon their conduct, may be termed their *experience*. Not to enlarge upon the experience of the Pagan, the Mahometan, the Jew, or the Papiſt, who have all enjoyments ſuitable to the nature of their own creed, I ſhall briefly notice that kind of experience which is talked of amongſt Proteſtants.

Firſt:

comforted again. It is very plain the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with any part of this; and it is as plain, that the hope founded upon it, and the comfort taken from it, are vain and deluſive; for the *ſenſe* in which the paſſages are underſtood, is contrary to the true meaning of the Spirit of truth in thoſe places. It is making a new meaning to the text; a meaning too which God never deſigned, and is in fact the ſame as making a new BIBLE; which is not the work of the Spirit of God. Beſides, there is no comfort that comes from God to guilty ſinners, but what comes through Chriſt, his righteouſneſs, and his atonement. But to take comfort under a ſenſe of having done wrong, from a perſuaſion that we are different from others, and from what we once were, is not the hope ſet before us in the goſpel. To ſuppoſe, therefore, that God would comfort any by ſuch means, is to ſuppoſe that he delights in ſinners out of his Son, and that he can comfort them in believing a lie: than which a greater abſurdity cannot be invented.

Again: if a perſon prays earneſtly to the Lord to direct him in the way of Providence, when, we will ſuppoſe, there are two or more ways before him, (though perhaps before he prays he has an inclination to one way) while he is muſing and in great perplexity, that paſſage comes ſuddenly into his mind, attended with the circumſtances mentioned in the other caſe, *This is the way, walk ye in it*; that is, the way he has moſt impreſſed upon his mind. He takes this for a notable anſwer to his prayer; and meeting with what his heart went after, he becomes confirmed in the perſuaſion, and has it ſtrengthened by, Gen. xxviii. 15. following it, *Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goeſt; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have*

ſpoken to thee of; and many others of the like import. Hence he concludes, that he has much intereſt with God; that he is beloved of the Lord, and that his ways are directed by him. Though there is no proof in all this that God has any hand whatever in the whole affair. But what is very remarkable, when a text of ſcripture comes to the mind which tends to diſtreſs, as for inſtance, when a doubting ſoul has darted into his mind the words of David, "I ſhall now periſh one day by the hand of Saul," it is ſaid to be the temptation of the Devil. But what reaſon can be aſſigned for this? Has Satan power only over *uncomfortable* paſſages of ſcripture; or cannot he pervert *any part* of them, to tempt and deceive men with? and if ſo, then its being a comfortable, or a precious promiſe, is no proof that Satan has not a hand in it. Yea, it appears to be his work *alone* when it tends to confirm the falſe joy, and falſe confidence of ſinners.

The experience of others ariſes from, and is maintained by, ſome imaginary ſymptoms of a work of grace in their ſouls; ſuch are going about in queſt of ſome token for good in themſelves, and when they hear the word, are ſearching in every corner of their heart, to ſee if ſomething favorable does not appear there, and that generally with a ſtrong bias in the mind, to make the moſt of what they find; that much the ſame uſe has been made of theſe ſigns, as the ancient Phariſees made of the law. Hence ſome ſigns and marks are given for profeſſors to judge of their ſtate by, that are common to believers and hypocrites; and others, that have no foundation at all in the word of God; from which, when they are perceived, or imagined to be in them, they conclude well of themſelves. But when the more thinking

part

part of them come to reflect, they perceive, that many have had thoſe things and yet fallen away, which tend to create ſad ſuſpenſe; and though nothing but the blood of Chriſt, flowing freely to the chief of ſinners, can effectually remove the torment of the mind, yet their leaders, either from ignorance of, or diſaffection to, this ſovereign remedy, ſet themſelves to diſtinguiſh where there is no difference, and to create reverence for their own judgment, divide and ſubdivide very nicely, betwixt what are genuine convictions, deſires, affections, and ſo on; and what are counterfeit, whereby the mind is frequently more entangled, and heavier burdens laid upon it. And after all the labour and pains, it is generally found a difficult piece of work, to perſuade ſome to think well of themſelves; the moſt that they can be brought to is, that, *they deſire to believe*; and when nothing elſe will do, they get ſome ſort of eaſe by hearing, that *the deſire of faith is faith*. This reminds me of what I once heard an old woman ſay to one of theſe "doubting believers," with whom ſhe had taken much pains to make her think well of herſelf; but her patience at length being worn out, ſhe exclaimed, "You are the moſt uncomfortable people in the world to talk to. There's no end in it, for no ſooner has one removed one doubt, but you bring up twenty more."—The opportunities wherein comfort and joy are obtained from this ſource, are called "Bethel-viſits;" and if the perſons are what is called orthodox in their creed, although they ſhould not think much about a godly converſation, or of obſerving all things whatſoever Chriſt has commanded, but on the contrary, through frequent returns of theſe fits of affection, ſhould grow tired of religion; yet believing the final perſeverance of the ſaints, they know, that if

once in grace then always in grace, and can addreſs their ſouls in words often uſed upon this occaſion:

"Did Jeſus once upon thee ſhine?
"Then Jeſus is for ever thine."

In like manner they are aſked, "Do you recollect, in any part of your life, either in reading, hearing, praying, or converſing, when you enjoyed the preſence of God?" (of which they are to form their own conceptions) "if ſo, then my ſoul for your's all is ſafe," or in words to this effect. Hence they conclude, that as by divine aſſiſtance they have exerted an act of faith (that is, perſuaded themſelves that they are not as other men) and have enjoyed the divine preſence—all is ſecure and well. It only happens to be "winter with the ſoul," and if the perſon dies in this wintry ſeaſon, it is hoped all is well, becauſe we have been told God puts many of his children *to bed in the dark!* If any doctrine deſerves to be denominated *Antinomian*, ſurely this does; for what can be more dangerous, or what have a greater tendency to lull profeſſors to ſleep, in the bed of carnal ſecurity, and encourage them to ſin, with the hope of impunity? Once more: there are others whoſe experiences ariſe from what is called by them the "aſſurance of faith," or, in other words, the appropriating the benefits of the goſpel, Chriſt, heaven, and ſo on, to *myſelf*; and if we cloſely attend to the experience ariſing from this doctrine, we ſhall find, that it does not come ſo much from the things believed, as from the conſciouſneſs that they are OURS. We ſhall hear perſons of this ſentiment cry down *works* and *legal doctrines*, and ſet up what they call *faith* in oppoſition to them, and they will ſpeak many excellent things about grace and the

the goſpel; but then we are ſomehow led to imagine, that theſe things, declared in common to the world, are little or nothing without the appropriating act. This act is ſometimes made upon internal qualifications; but others cut the matter much ſhorter, and appropriate, without any evidence, either from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, or in other words they vainly imagine, though firmly perſuade themſelves, that it is ſo, becauſe they believe it to be ſo. They confeſs that it is not a truth before it is believed, but becomes a certain truth when they believe it, and never would have been true, had not they aſſured themſelves that it was ſo. This perſuaſion begets joy and great peace, yea, even leads them (to uſe one of their own expreſſions) to "baſk before the throne." Such will talk of lying very humbly before the Lord, and will make high pretences to humility; but not knowing wherein true humility conſiſts, they very aukwardly ape it. In giving an account of their rich experiences, wonderful diſcoveries, and ſo on, they tell us "at ſuch a ſeaſon I was humbled in the very duſt—was entirely emptied of ſelf—ſaw my heart as black as hell, and as deceitful as the devil, and was as low as I well could be in ſelf-abaſement." And this will be attended with great outward ſhow of humiliation; perhaps, in the meanneſs or peculiarity of their dreſs—the affected manner of their ſpeech—ſome ſtrange geſtures—ſolemn looks, &c. ſo that if one would take their word for it, they are the moſt humble creatures under heaven. Yet if their general conduct is but cloſely looked into, we ſhall ſee them to be the moſt haughty, aſſuming, and audaciouſly proud, of any among the ſons of men. The writer has had occaſion to ſee the beſt-affected humility ſpoiled, by an honeſt friend to truth charging the pretender thereto, with the very thing he had confeſſed himſelf the ſubject of.

The perſon, whom we will call *Humilis*, having, in one of his prayers, confeſſed before the Lord, the hypocriſy of his heart, that he was leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints, and not worthy to be named among the children of God: his friend having obſerved ſome things about him, which laid but too juſt a foundation for ſuch a confeſſion, took the liberty of expoſtulating with him. But *Humilis* having forgot what manner of perſon he had confeſſed himſelf to be, was very much chagrined at the charge; his temper warmed, and at length aroſe to the heights of reſentment; in ſhort, if the whole were told, it would appear, that *Humilis* had a very deceitful ſenſe of the deceitfulneſs of his heart. From hence it is plain, as well as from various other circumſtances, that the chief end in this voluntary humility, is to be thought very humble Chriſtians, and perſons of great diffidence, by all who hear them, that in their eſtimation they may be ſet foremoſt on the liſts of ſaints. The account God makes of this parade, may be ſeen Iſaiah lxv. 5. The whole of it is founded in ignorance; for did ſuch know what *cauſe* there is in them, for ſelf-abaſement before God; *that* would appear ſo great, that aſtoniſhment would ſeize them, that ſuch wretches as they are, ſo filthy and abominable, are not more deeply abaſed before him whoſe name is HOLY. If we did but entertain juſt ſentiments of ourſelves, we ſhould wonder why the Lord ſhould condeſcend, to call our loweſt abaſement *humility*, when even then we are infinitely ſhort of being ſo low as we ought to be. A perſon truly humbled before God, would think it a much greater inſtance of pride in him to boaſt of his humility, than for a ſlave who has waſhed his maſter's feet, to triumph in the great ſtoop he had made. But the fact is, thoſe who delight to talk of their humility, have an intolerably high conceit of their own importance:

importance; which makes them think, that the leaſt condeſcenſion below what they imagine themſelves to be, is great humility! We alſo hear much of their hearts being filled with the love of God, and how great their love to God is. But their love flows from a vain, blind conceit, that God loves them in particular; it is not the true character of God, either in the law, or in the goſpel, that draws their attention. Beſides, did they know the infinite lovelineſs of God, and the boundleſs lengths, breadths, and depths of his love to ſinners, they would be led, in their higheſt flame of love to God, to confeſs, that in compariſon with what it ought to be, it is very flat and languid. But if *their own intereſt* in the great things of God be called in queſtion; if they are charged with ſin, becauſe of the ſad and ſhameful defects in their love, and are told, that nothing can relieve them, under a ſenſe of their deficiencies, notwithſtanding all their former experiencies, but that which ſaved the *Thief* upon the croſs; if they are warned to fear, leſt a promiſe being made of entering into reſt, any of them ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it, and are addreſſed with thoſe words, "Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall:"—We ſhall be charged with razing foundations—making the hearts of God's people ſad—diſcouraging them in their pilgrimage, and laying ſtumbling blocks in the way; and, in the temper that influenced our Lord's hearers in the ſynagogue at Nazareth, we ſhall hear them ſaying, "What, have I, who have been a profeſſor of Chriſt ſo many years, and have been indulged with communion with God—I, who have baſked before the throne, and have been indulged with ſo many Bethel-viſits from the Lord—am I at laſt reduced to the ſame ſituation, as to the ground of my hope and comfort, as a ſinner in his firſt coming to Chriſt?

Chriſt? How ſhocking the thought! How alarming the conſideration! If I could admit this to be true, I muſt give up all, and deſpair!"—Thus ſome have ſhown their enmity to the goſpel hope, and plainly declared, that their experience comes from the ſoothing thought that Chriſt and heaven are *theirs*; though it is certain that Chriſt propoſes nothing, but his grace manifeſted in his death and reſurrection, for the relief of any of his people, under a conſciouſneſs of their deficiencies and daily back-ſlidings: Witneſs, 2 Cor. xii. 8. Rev. i. 17. From the whole, though one would be ready to think, from hearing the doctrinal creed of theſe perſons, that they have ſome regard for the diſallowed goſpel, yet when we trace them to their experiences, and mark the uſe they make of them, it but too viſibly appears where their hope in reality is grounded.

From the ſpecimens that have been produced of the beſt-approved experiences, though each party is ready to cenſure the other, either for legality or preſumption, and ſo would ſeem widely to differ from them; every one taught of God will eaſily diſcern, that in fact they all agree in *one central point*; and that is, to make up ſome kind of foundation for the guilty to build their hope upon, aſide from the perfect atonement, and everlaſting righteouſneſs, of the Son of God. And though ſome will ſpeak of Chriſt's work in high ſtrains, and would at firſt view appear to make it all in all; yet it is plain, that without taking into conſideration ſomething either acquired by them, or wrought in them, along with his work, they do not find reſt to their ſouls; and therefore the more clear the profeſſion, the greater the deception, and the more liable to entangle unweary ſouls. Becauſe this kind of *ſelf-dependance* is varniſhed over with evangelical phraſes, and ſo lies deep and unſuſpected.

pected. Whether then our preſervative againſt deſpair, or the ſource of our experience, be called—everlaſting reaſon—a life of piety, virtue, and devotion—ſome pleaſing feelings of the mind, ariſing either from bodily ſenſations, dreams, impreſſions upon the imagination, or the zeal of a bluſtering preacher—the evidence of a ſupported work of grace begun, or a powerful perſuaſion of the goodneſs of our ſtate, it is foreign to the hope ſet before the guilty in the goſpel, and far diſtant from the ſource of all true Chriſtian experience. In them, therefore, who are thus carried away, are the words of the Prophet verified, Iſ. ix. 16. *The leaders of this people cauſe them to err; and they that are led of them are deſtroyed.* It would be the greateſt happineſs that could befall ſuch, to be fairly convinced of the deluſion, and be perſuaded of the ſufficiency of the truth in Chriſt to give them peace and joy in believing. But alas! their bands are generally ſtrong, and the leaſt that is to be expected, for making the friendly attempt (unleſs the arm of the Lord be revealed) is a ſneer, an outcry of uncharitableneſs, a complaint of a bad ſpirit, or a charge of being an enemy to Chriſtian experience.

SECTION II.

WHEREIN THE NATURE OF TRUE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IS CONSIDERED.

IT is very common for perſons carried away with the workings of corrupted nature, and the deluſions of Satan, to charge thoſe who, out of love to their ſouls, expoſtulate with them, and expoſe their error to them, with denying all Chriſtian experience.

But

But is it not very unfair to conclude, that becauſe we don't hold a point to be true, in *every ſenſe* in which perſons have ſet it forth, therefore we do not believe it in *any ſenſe?*—Every Chriſtian has experience of the following nature, viz. That which ariſeth from the fleſh, the corruption of nature, and the various trials with which his heavenly Father ſees meet to prove him; and from the inward proof, or trial that his ſoul has, of the goſpel of peace and ſalvation, or from finding that to be true, by actual enjoyment, which he believes upon the unerring teſtimony of God. Of theſe we ſhall ſpeak more particularly.

Firſt: Man is naturally of the earth, earthy. His conſtitution was framed to dwell on the earth, and to hold communion with God in the things that are made, through the medium of his obedience; ſo that it was no crime for Adam to ſet his affections on things which are upon the earth, or to be of a legal ſpirit. We may juſtly ſay, therefore, that it is *natural* for man to cleave to the earth, and alſo to have a ſtrong propenſity to ſeek the favor of God by his own works. This ſtate is commonly termed nature, or the natural man, and at other times the fleſh. Rom. iv. 1. Gal. iii. 3. 1. Cor. ii. 14. But James iii. 15. not only repreſents man as *earthly*, but alſo *ſenſual*, and *deviliſh*; and Paul, referring to the ſame thing, ſays, *The carnal mind is enmity againſt God, it is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*, Rom. viii. 7. 8. Such is the dreadful malignity of the fleſh as corrupted by ſin, and ſuch the contrariety of it to the divine nature, that it is impoſſible it ever ſhould be made like to God, or even in the leaſt degree conformed to him, being in its very eſſence abſolute ENMITY againſt him.—This corrupt principle is properly inherent, being interwoven with the very texture of our conſtitution. Or rather we are ſaid to be

be *in the fleſh*, that is, covered in and overwhelmed with its impurity; ſo that naturally our thoughts, words, and actions, are under the dominion and powerful influence thereof.—When a ſoul is born of God, we are not to imagine that the *old man* is better natured than he was before; or that there is a change *in our corrupt nature* for the better. For we have the authority of the Holy Ghoſt to ſay, and the experience of Paul to evince, that *in the fleſh* dwells no good thing, it is neither converted nor totally deſtroyed. There is indeed a *new* principle, a vital, ſpiritual, and divine ſource of life implanted, which liveth and abideth for ever; even the word which by the goſpel is preached, and which is called *ſpirit*. But this is not nature renewed, but a principle as oppoſite to nature, as light is to darkneſs. Hence we read that the *fleſh* luſteth againſt the *ſpirit*, and the *ſpirit* againſt the *fleſh*, and theſe are CONTRARY the one to the other, ſo that ye cannot do the things that ye would, Gal. v. 17. Corrupt nature, or ſin that dwelleth in us, is ſo full of enmity to God, ſo deceitful, ſo deſperately wicked, that it is *paſt all cure*. We might as well attempt to waſh the Ethiopian white, or to change the Leopard's ſpots, as to make the carnal mind any better diſpoſed towards God and his law; even the great Phyſician himſelf has marked it incurable, and died that it might be *deſtroyed*, Rom. vi. 6. It muſt, therefore, in whatever meaſure it remains in the ſoul, retain its corrupt principles and properties.—Now the oppoſite principles of *fleſh* and *ſpirit*, or *nature* and *grace*, dwelling in the ſame ſoul, they cannot fail to oppoſe each other. Each ſtrives for the victory, and aims at the total extirpation of the other, ſo that war is continually maintained, James iv. 1. 1. Peter ii. 11. Every believer, then, has painful experience of this law in his members, warning againſt the law

of

of his mind, which has made the Saints in all ages groan, being burthened. Hence we find ſome of them making uſe of ſuch expreſſive language as the following,—*Behold I am vile—I abhor myſelf—I am undone—I am as a beaſt before thee—I am more brutiſh than any man, and have not the underſtanding of a man—In me, that is in my fleſh, dwelleth no good thing.* Thoſe who have been made partakers of *grace*, cannot be reconciled to the *fleſh*; they long and pray for its deſtruction, in all its properties. The different and oppoſite actings of fleſh and ſpirit may briefly be deſcribed as follows: We have ſeen, that man was framed to live by virtue of his *own* righteouſneſs; hence ſelf-righteouſneſs is a chief property of nature, and all who are born again, find in themſelves a ſtrong bias to reject the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and eſtabliſh their own; and that in various forms, and under various pretences; and none but believers in Chriſt are aware of the evil of this propenſity—this is the root of unbelief—this cleaves cloſe to, and eaſily beſets, every child of Adam; but as the believer only is conſcious of it, the more he increaſes in the knowledge of Jeſus, the more perceptible will theſe ſelf-righteous propenſities be to him. So that, though once he was very unwilling to think himſelf indiſpoſed to the goſpel, he now finds a conſtant neceſſity of ſuſpecting himſelf of this evil. But the true grace of God in the heart leads the ſinner to live by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt:—its genuine language is, *And be found in him not having my own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith*, and, *I will make mention of thy righteouſneſs, even of thine only.* Here then is the chief point where watchfulneſs in the believer is requiſite, leſt the ever-reſtleſs principle of ſelf-righteouſneſs ſhould prevail. The

fleſh

fleſh tends to the earth, being earthy—the *ſpirit* is for having the affection ſet on things above, and for looking for the mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto eternal life. The *fleſh* is for gratifying the corrupt inclinations, which are ſenſual and deviliſh;—the *ſpirit* is for mortifying the deeds of the body, and denying all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts. *Nature* ſhudders at the thought of death, and, indeed, were it to act otherwiſe, it would deny itſelf—the *ſpiritual* deſire is, *To depart and be with Chriſt, which is far better.* Thus we ſee, that every believer has a carnal, fleſhly principle dwelling in him, but not reigning; abiding, but not ruling; in ſome meaſure caſt down, but not entirely deſtroyed. He has alſo a ſpiritual and divine principle, an immortal ſeed that is ſpringing up unto everlaſting life. When nature is diſſolved, the corrupt principle will be deſtroyed, and in the reſurrection, the Saints ſhall have their bodies faſhioned like unto Chriſt's glorious body, and their renewed ſpirits ſhall inhabit this incorruptible frame; and by virtue of that righteouſneſs, which is upon all who believe, enjoy eternal life.

Again: the believer has much experience, ariſing from the various trials which his heavenly Father ſees meet to bring upon him; or which he, through his own weakneſs or imprudence, may bring upon himſelf. The trials of his faith may be of various kinds; ſometimes proſperity, and at other times adverſity; which have their different effects upon his mind; all of which tend to convince him, of ſtanding in conſtant need of being upheld by the Lord, and in the end prove rich benefits to his ſoul, Heb. xii. 10. James i. 2, 4. 1 Peter i. 7. He finds, under theſe various trials, that *Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope.* For while under the painful feelings of the body of ſin and

death, the temptations of ſatan, who is continually attacking him, and the trials of life, he experiences divine grace ſufficient for him; ſo that while in the world he has tribulation, in Jeſus he has peace. He has thereby that hope, which is built *alone* on the riches of divine grace, *confirmed*; and thereby knows in whom he has believed, and becomes perſuaded (not only from the certainty that ariſeth from the divine declaration, but from his own joyful experience) that he is able to keep that which he has committed to him until that day; having found already that the love and power of Chriſt were ſufficient to ſupport him when, *Without were fightings—within were fears.*

Secondly: we have now to ſpeak more largely of the inward proof and trial that believers have of goſpel truths. Such is the nature of every goſpel truth, that no ſooner is it received in the light of the Holy Spirit, than it produces in the mind every anſwerable affection; and as the happy ſoul advances in the knowledge of the truth, he finds himſelf, as it were, in an infinite circle. The tranſcendent beauty, glory, and ſuitableneſs of divine truth, engage his attention: with ſteady purpoſe of heart he purſues it, and receives the bleſſings contained in it; whereby his ſoul is fed, nouriſhed, and ſtrengthened, though far from being *cloyed*; but finding his life in the enjoyment thereof, preſſes after more enlarged views and experience of the bleſſed realities, even until he arrives at all riches of the full aſſurance of underſtanding, which, in the very nature of the thing, muſt lead him an eternal round of knowing, and deſiring to know—of enjoying and longing to enjoy: ſtill riſing higher and higher—ſtill learning more of the excellent knowledge of Chriſt; of his unparalleled, exquiſite, and ſatisfying ſweetneſs, which only makes the ſoul hunger

hunger and thirſt for more! for the truth of Chriſt can never, never cloy.

Here it might be obſerved, that what diſtinguiſhes true goſpel-experience from its various counterfeits, is, *The truth as it is in Jeſus*: this is what the ſoul feels the force of and not any *manner* in which the mind is exerciſed, in looking to, or receiving the truth, but the truth *itſelf*, even all the excellent things contained in the goſpel, viz. the glorious character of God, his great love in giving his dear, his only, his well-beloved Son, to die the juſt for the unjuſt—the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs—and the glory, ſufficiency, and freeneſs of the goſpel to heal, pardon, and ſave the guilty. So that when a Chriſtian ſpeaks of his experience, he will not furniſh us with a long detail of what he has been aſſiſted to do, what ſucceſs and diſappointments he has met with (in attempting to eſtabliſh his own righteouſneſs) what doubts and fears he has had about the goodneſs of his ſtate, and his "ſecret hope at bottom" from his former experience, and ſo on; but having his heart directed into the love of God, out of the fulneſs thereof, he will ſpeak of the ſovereign favour of God—the beauties of the Redeemer's perſon, and the glory, excellency, and perfection of his finiſhed work. With theſe pleaſing realities his ſoul is ſo taken up, that he has no time to beſtow any compliments upon himſelf, or his own attainments: a ſenſe of the former charms, chains, and captivates his ſoul; an acquaintance with the latter lays him in the duſt—ſhows him what a poor, wretched, helpleſs ſinner he is ſtill—how deceitful his heart is—how prone to let ſlip the goſpel-hope, and that he has need of many humbling, and affecting leſſons, to ſubdue his pride. Hence he learns the neceſſity of diſtruſting himſelf,

ſelf, of keeping a watchful eye over his own heart, and of holding faſt the beginning of his confidence ſtedfaſt unto the end.

Having given ſome general hints about the nature of goſpel-experience, we ſhall now attend a little more particularly to the ſubject. But it will not be amiſs to collect from the foregoing eſſays, a ſummary of the goſpel, which we have ſeen is the genuine ſource of all true experience. The Angel in proclaiming the Saviour's advent, addreſſed the ſhepherds thus, *Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which ſhall be to* ALL *people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a* SAVIOUR, *who is Chriſt the Lord.* Which manifeſtation brings *Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.* The primary glory of the goſpel conſiſts in the divine perfections of wiſdom, holineſs, juſtice, love, mercy, truth, and faithfulneſs, being therein glorified in the higheſt. But in this bright mirror of DEITY, there is alſo repreſented the moſt ſhocking ſcene of human miſery that can poſſibly be ſet forth, while yet, the good pleaſure of God is manifeſted to men, in the all-ſufficient relief that is provided there for ſinners of all nations. Theſe things publiſhed, contain good tidings of great joy to ALL PEOPLE, whether they entertain them as ſuch or no; for our reception or rejection of a truth cannot poſſibly alter its nature. The glad tidings of the goſpel point immediately to every one who hears them. Unto *you* is the word of this ſalvation ſent; and through this man is preached unto *you* the forgiveneſs of ſins, is its benign language to every one who hears it. Whoever then is taught of God, to underſtand the goſpel, will not conceive of it merely as an account of what God intends to do for ſome unknown perſons; but he ſees a wide door opened to ſinners of every nation and degree, without

out diſtinction. No perſon, therefore, who doubts of the ſufficiency of the finiſhed work of Chriſt, to give *him* immediate relief under the deepeſt ſenſe of guilt, believes, that very forgiveneſs that is with God. No perſon queſtioning its unlimited freeneſs, or whether it is addreſſed to ſinners *as ſuch*, believes the ſame goſpel that Jeſus and his Apoſtles preached. No one believing that the bleſſings of the goſpel belong to him, becauſe he is properly principled or qualified, in preference to thoſe who are ungodly and without ſtrength, underſtands and knows that goſpel that is good tidings of great joy to *all people*. It is not denied that either of theſe perſons, heartily, ſincerely, affectionately, and ſteadily believe the goſpel *in ſome ſenſe*, as did Simon Magus, the ſtony ground hearers and others. But to receive the goſpel in any other ſenſe than that which the holy Spirit teacheth, is the moſt fundamental and pernicious error that any can fall into. However, all who have heard and learned of the Father, and ſo have received the truth in the love of it, will find that it has, in ſome degree or other, the following effects, which may be called the experience of it.

Firſt: Chriſtian experience conſiſts in the enjoyment of *peace* in the conſcience. The work of righteouſneſs, that the divine Surety wrought, has made perfect peace with God. Eph. ii. 14. 16. 2 Cor. v. 19. God is now *the very God of peace*, Chriſt is *the Prince of peace*—the word that proclaims the Saviour's work is *the goſpel of peace*, and the Spirit who enlightens the underſtanding by that word to know the truth, is *the Spirit of peace*. Surely then the neceſſary effect of the goſpel known and believed, muſt be *peace* in the conſcience. For as the knowledge of God and his law gives the guilty conſcience torment; ſo the

knowledge of the ATONEMENT, or full, free, and everlaſting forgiveneſs by the blood of Chriſt, who through the eternal Spirit offered himſelf without ſpot to God, purges the conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God. Now this peace of conſcience which always, in ſome degree, follows the belief of the truth, ariſes *merely* from the blood of Chriſt, as it freely flows in the goſpel proclamation, to ſinners of all nations, ranks, and degrees. Hence it appears that true peace does not ariſe in the guilty conſcience, from any thing that the ſinner by reflection finds in himſelf, or from conſideration of what he at any time has done, or under any influence whatever has been enabled to do; nor even from any evidences of a true work of grace in his ſoul; but ſimply and alone, from the exceeding abundant grace revealed in the goſpel, which becomes his hope. Nothing, therefore, can be more evident, than that he is under ſome fatal miſtake, about the very nature of the goſpel, whoſe faith does not bring peace to his ſoul. Either he has ſome ſuſpicion that the blood of Chriſt *alone* is not ſufficient to cleanſe *him* from all ſin—that it is not ſo free as to be for every ſinner as a ſinner that believes it, or that ſome work of the ſpirit muſt be perceived in his ſoul before he muſt take the comfort which the goſpel brings: which miſtake, however ſmall it may ſeem, if not corrected, will prove deſtructive. It is true, many are crying peace to themſelves, when there is no peace; but then every kind of falſe peace flows from ſome miſtaken notion of the goſpel; from ſomething different from that, which removes the ground of all fear and torment in the ſoul. Peace coming in this way may be ſaid to proceed from believing: but from believing what? Not that God is well pleaſed in his Son, but that we are properly principled

cipled for receiving Chriſt, or ſomething of that nature, under ſome other name. True peace leads the ſinner to an abſolute and immediate dependance upon the Lord; and ſo reſtores him to that from which he fell: while every falſe peace (as in ſome form or other it leads to truſt in ſomething within) cheriſhes and promotes that awful apoſtacy, which began in ſelf-dependance.

Secondly: the believer experiences the meritorious righteouſneſs and perfect atonement of Chriſt, to be a ſufficient encouragement, to give him boldneſs and acceſs with confidence at the throne of grace. Many have qurrelled with the *Phariſee* mentioned in the parable, Luke xviii. on account of the haughty manner of his approach to God, who yet, in reality, come in the very ſame way themſelves. But thoſe who have been taught of God, find no other ground of encouragement and confidence than what the *Publican* had. Under the moſt aggravated ſenſe of guilt, and conviction of many ſad and ſhameful deficiencies, they derive all their encouragement, from having ſuch an atoning ſacrifice to look to—ſuch a faithful God to truſt in—ſuch an altar to offer up their prayers and praiſes upon—ſuch rich incenſe to perfume them with, as the Mediator's interceſſion, and ſuch an high prieſt over the houſe of God. They mourn indeed over ſin with bitter lamentation, abhor themſelves as the ſubjects of it, and watch againſt it as their worſt enemy; but do not take their lamentations, abaſements, &c. into conſideration in their approaches to God, but, looking to the propitiation, ſay, *Have mercy upon me O God, according to thy loving-kindneſs: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my tranſgreſſion:* many who *profeſs* to draw nigh to God in this way, have nevertheleſs the full teſtimony of their conſcience, that in all their approaches there is ſtill a

ſad

ſad diſtance between God and them. * Yet if at any time they can approach the throne, in the perſuaſion that they are leſs ſinners than once they were—under a conſciouſneſs of more affection in their worſhip than uſual, and leſs deficiencies—or in the belief that they are the children of God, they would have more encouragement, hope of acceſs, and pleaſure in their devotion. But this way of approach is founded in legality, manifeſts that the heart is not right with God, and is directly oppoſite to the new and living way of coming to him. Heb. x. 19. 22.

Thirdly: in theſe things, and in this way, the believer has the joyful experience of *communion with God*. Communion ſignifies fellowſhip, common poſſeſſion, or a partaking of the ſame thing; and communion with God conſiſts in being pleaſed with, and taking delight in, that which is the centre of his delights, with which his ſmiles, or the manifeſtation of the light of his countenance, are always connected. Nothing deſerves the name of communion with God, but that pleaſure which ariſes in the ſoul from underſtanding and knowing the Lord, who executeth loving-kindneſs, judgment, and righteouſneſs in the earth; for

* What follows to the end of this paragraph would require to be a little guarded, leſt it ſhould be conſtrued to mean, that the Spirit of adoption, and the teſtimony of a believer's conſcience to the influence of the truth upon him, are inconſiſtent with his coming to God in the new and living way. Surely the author could not mean this, and the Apoſtle, on the contrary, ſays, "Beloved, if our hearts "condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God; and what-"ſoever we aſk, we receive of him, becauſe we keep his command-"ments, and do thoſe things that are pleaſing in his ſight." 1 Joh. iii. 21. 22. referring to our Lord's words, Joh. xv. 7. The fact is, tho' Chriſt is the alone way of acceſs to the Father, yet no man can draw near in this way, or have true confidence before God thro' him, while he is conſcious of allowed hypocriſy or want of love to the brethren; the ſcripture repels ſuch confidence, (Iſa. i. 15. Mat. v. 23. 24. Ch. vi. 14. 15. Mark xi. 25. 26) and the mediation of Chriſt was never intended to ſupport it.—Ed.

for in theſe things I delight ſaith the Lord, Jer. ix. 24. If we would know when this grand exhibition was made on the earth, the voice from the excellent glory informs us, when pointing to the obedience and ſufferings of Chriſt, and the glory that ſhould follow, "*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed.*" Whoever therefore, is well pleaſed with, and delights in the perſon and work of Immanuel, has communion with God in his bleſſedneſs, even fellowſhip with the Father and his ſon Jeſus Chriſt. But this is very different from what is commonly, though profanely, called communion with God, which ariſes merely from *ſelf-love* and *ſelf-conceit*. Some are confident they hold communion with God; baſk before the ſun of righteouſneſs; dwell upon the Mount; and have frequent Bethel-viſits, becauſe they have ſome impulſes in their duties, or ſecret whiſpers, which they call the witneſs of the ſpirit, that God loves them far above the greater part of the world; which leads them to talk highly of eternal things, ſuch as, perſonal election, covenant tranſactions, and unchanging love, particular redemption, the final perſeverance of the ſaints, and the enjoyment of eternal glory. * And while this is the caſe, as a certain author obſerves, "Even pride itſelf will prejudice them in favour of that which they call Chriſt. Selfiſh, proud man naturally calls that lovely, that greatly contributes to *his* intereſt, and gratifies *his* ambition."—To be upon the Mount, is to underſtand and delight in what was declared there. To have a Bethel-viſit, is to behold heaven and earth united, and an intercourſe opened between God and man, in the perſon and work of the mighty God of Jacob, manifeſted in the fleſh. To behold all ſalvation

* It is not theſe *doctrines* that are intended to be cenſured, for they are great and glorious in their own nature; but the *abuſe* of them.

tion and all deſire in Chriſt—to rejoice in him having no confidence in the fleſh, and to glory in this, that we underſtand and know the Lord as *a juſt God and a Saviour*, this is communion with God, and nothing elſe deſerves the name.

Fourthly: the goſpel preſents Jehovah's character in the moſt *lovely* point of view: ſo that no one can behold him as there revealed without *loving* him with a ſupreme affection. Indeed the beauty of God's moral image is ſet forth in the holy law; and in that repreſentation he is infinitely worthy to be loved, by all intelligent beings; and not to love him, in this view, is infinitely criminal. But while man's natural corrupt principles reign; ſo far is he from loving this infinitely amiable character, that his heart riſes in enmity againſt it; which indeed is an awful proof of that groſs darkneſs which, through unbelief of his mercy, covers the ſoul. Now tho' every rational creature is under obligations to love God for his own excellency (which every believer will do) and though not to love him with all the heart, juſtly deſerves everlaſting puniſhment; yet nothing is more certain, from ſcripture and fact, than that no perſon will love God in truth till his natural enmity is broken: which is never done till the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, by the word of truth, quicken his ſoul. The natural man may love that notion of God which ſuits his carnal, deceitful, proud, ſenſual heart; but every notion of him that does not give us juſt views of his glorious majeſty, holineſs, &c. tends to lead us into idolatry. Some are diſpoſed to love God, becauſe they conceive of him as a being ſo good and benevolent, that he cannot find in his heart to damn them for their ſins.—Others feel an affection for the DEITY becauſe they believe he has pardoned all their ſins—exalted them above many of their fellow-creatures,

and

and that all the joys of heaven are their own. And theſe we ſhall hear ſpeaking in high ſtrains, about ſovereign, free, electing love; who yet, when the true nature of God's ſovereign love is ſet forth, and his true character declared, will, like the antient Phariſees (who alſo believed a kind of *abſolute Predeſtination*, *) *hate it*. Yet ſo eſſential is *love to God* to the Chriſtian † character, that he who loveth not is not of God; for God is love. And upon the perſon who loves not out Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, the moſt awful curſes are denounced.—To love God includes (1ſt) Love to that amazing grace, ſhown towards ſinners in opening a way for their deliverance from deſerved wrath. *In this was manifeſt the love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins*, 1 John iv. 9. 10. John iii. 16. (2dly) In connection with the above, love to him for his ſpecial benefits and favours conferred upon us; for it would be an inſtance of the greateſt ingratitude not to love him for the beſtowment of favours ſo divine. (3dly) Love to that grand and moſt beautiful diſplay of the divine perfections, drawn out in the obedience and atonement of Chriſt. Here the divine holineſs ſhines forth with the brighteſt luſtre, in its infinite oppoſition to ſin, by appointing the HOLY ONE to magnify the law and make it honorable—the inflexible juſtice of God appears in its perſiſting in the puniſhment of ſin according to its infinite demerits, even though his well-beloved Son muſt bear the weighty ſtroke; and every other divine attribute ſhines moſt glorioufly. Whoever

* See Prideaux's Connection, vol. ii. part ii. p. 341.

† The paſſage referred to more immediately reſpects love to the brethren, which indeed ariſes from love to God.—Ed.

ever acknowledges this, and loves this appearance of the true God, juſtifies the divine proceedings toward the angels that fell; and alſo his dealings with ſinners who break the law; and owns, that if all the world had been conſigned over to eternal death, the character of God would have appeared infinitely glorious. We ſhall hear many talking of beholding great beauty in Jehovah's goodneſs, mercy and love, who manifeſt no diſpoſition to love him, for the tremendous diſplay of his holineſs and juſtice, in oppoſition to ſin. Yet nothing but a full conviction of divine glory in the diſtribution of juſtice, will effectually ſtop the cavils of man's pride, againſt the procedure of divine ſovereignty.

But here let it be obſerved, that no one can love God, and at the ſame time love ſin. 1 John i. 6. No one can love God, and at the ſame time hate his law, or ſpeak unworthy things of it. Rom. vii. 12. No perſon loves God who goes about to pervert the goſpel of his grace, Gal. i. 8. Nor can any one love God, who does not love his brother, and ſtudy the good of mankind. 1 John iv. 20. chap. iii. 17—Every one who loves the character of God is led to imitate it.

Fifthly: the goſpel of grace gives the higheſt diſplay of the great God: of his tremendous perfections, and their infinite oppoſition to ſin; ſo that wher-ever it is truly known and received, it cannot fail to implant the *fear of God*. The black character of the wicked is, that *There is no fear of God before their eyes*. Rom. iii. 18. Hence the Lord promiſes, in the new and everlaſting covenant, to put *his fear* into his people's hearts. And this, we are informed, is the beginning of wiſdom.—Every doctrine, but the doctrine of Chriſt, tends more or leſs to keep out godly fear from the ſoul. Hence the goſpel, though it is the

the very ſource of the joys of the Holy Ghoſt, ſtrikes at the root of all falſe confidence, falſe joys and diſobedience. A ſort of fear or dread of God is ſometimes awakened by the dictates of the natural conſcience, and enforced by the written law; but from the knowledge of the truth, the fulleſt impreſſions of the living God are made on the mind, and, of courſe, a more genuine and laſting experience of his fear is implanted there; the happy and ſalutary effects of which, among many others, are the following: (1ſt) It begets conviction of ſin in the ſoul, where the conſcience has been ſeared, and enforces and confirms it, where ſlight impreſſions have been made. Nothing is better ſuited to awaken the attention to a juſt ſenſe of ſin, than the preaching of the croſs of Chriſt, which makes known God's terrible wrath againſt it. Deep convictions of ſin may be in the ſoul, previous to any ſaving illumination, and may occaſion great terrors there, which may be ſtifled and expelled by a falſe hope: but when the perfection of the holy law appears to the ſinner in the glaſs of Chriſt's ſufferings, then he perceives that God is juſt indeed! and that there is nothing about himſelf, but what expoſes him to the moſt awful frown of Jehovah; and from this ſource he learns more of the infinite heinouſneſs of ſin, and has the fulleſt diſplay of its dreadful conſequences. The fear of God, in the ſenſe ſpoken of here, as proceeding from the knowledge of God in Chriſt, is perfectly conſiſtent with the ſtrongeſt confidence of Chriſt's ability to ſave to the uttermoſt —it poſſeſſes the mind of a believer in the full aſſurance of faith—in the delightful enjoyments of love, and in the firmeſt perſuaſion of his own intereſt, in electing, redeeming, calling, and preſerving grace. Yea this reverence and godly fear maintains in the ſoul, an increaſing view of the evil nature of ſin,

while it grows in knowledge of, love to, and hope in, the goſpel of peace: and is therefore diſtinct in its very nature, from that ſlaviſh fear, which ariſes from *pride*, working in a way of painful deſire, attended with many fears, till it is crowned with the enjoyment of ſelf-complacency in its own works *—quite the reverſe of that fear, which fills the mind with torment, till it can ſay, with ſome aſſurance, *God I thank thee that I am not as other men.* It cannot be thought the true believer is led by his faith in Chriſt, and confidence of intereſt in him, to fear ſin leſs, then whan he expected to be ſent to Hell for the commiſſion of it; or is emboldened to tranſgreſs the leaſt command in hope of impunity; much leſs will he embrace that vile tenet, that ſoul deſtructive error, that believers are not under the law as a rule of conduct, and ſo cannot ſin! Nor does the believer in Chriſt imagine that *his* ſins are leſs diſpleaſing to God, or leſs deſerving of the curſe, than thoſe of the moſt profane; that ſentiment is purely *Antinomian*, which teaches

* This *ſeems* to glance at a paſſage in Sandeman's letters on Theron and Aſpaſio, ſee 4th Ed. vol. ii page, 8 20—*If ſo*, it appears, that the author muſt have much miſunderſtood the paragraph, as it does not ſeem to be applied in the eſſays, according to its real meaning and intention. In order, therefore, to do juſtice to Mr. Sandeman, we have thought it neceſſary to inſert the ſentence at large.

His words are, "No man, then, by enjoying the Holy Spirit as "the Comforter, can find any ground for being leſs afraid of ſin-"ning, or of its conſequences, than he was before: For he no ſooner "indulges any evil affection, or any thought oppoſite to charity, "than he loſes that enjoyment. Paul ſuppoſes, that men who "have taſted of this enjoyment, may, by indulging the paſſions "oppoſite to charity, grieve the Holy Spirit, and ſo loſe that en-"joyment; ſo he ſays, Eph. iv. 30. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of "God, whereby ye are ſealed unto the day of redemption.* They who "thus grieve the Holy Spirit, muſt find mercy and forgiveneſs in "the ſame way as at the firſt; and their love muſt be left to work "in the way of painful deſire, and fear, till it be again crowned "with enjoyment, and ſo perfected."—Ed.

teaches profeſſors to think that *their* ſins only deſerve *fatherly chaſtiſements*. What! does our profeſſion of faith in Chriſt make ſin otherwiſe than an infinite evil in us? Or does God, like ſome indulgent parent, wink at our tranſgreſſions? Far be it from us to think ſo of him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; rather let us ſay that the leaſt tranſgreſſion in a profeſſor, is attended with abundantly more ingratitude and baſeneſs than in others, and will lead a real believer to the blood of Jeſus for pardon as a poor ſinner, who has no hope but in the promiſe of mercy to the guilty. But this ſentiment wears a very hoſtile aſpect towards thoſe who get relief, when under a ſenſe of guilt, by referring to their paſt experiences: and indeed it muſt be offenſive to our corrupt nature; becauſe it neceſſarily leads the ſoul to live near to, and conſtantly dependant upon, an infinitely holy and ſovereign God. (2dly) The true fear of God in the heart promotes a genuine ſpirit of devotion, and a ſuitable frame of ſoul for the whole worſhip of God. Many, out of a falſe notion of boldneſs, and eminent nearneſs to, and familiarity with God, are guilty of much impertinence and irreverence before him. Did but the fear of God prevail in our ſouls, we ſhould not dare to approach him but with ſentiments of deep abaſement. Believers, it is true, do not come before the Lord as *ſlaves*, but with a nearneſs of *union* and *relation*; yet the ſubjects of the true grace of God are taught by that grace, to worſhip and ſerve him with reverence and godly fear—for our God is a conſuming fire. In this way the angels worſhip, Iſaiah vi. (3dly.) By this fear the Lord preſerves his people from falling away, Jer. xxxii. 10. By this the believer knows that God is well pleaſed only in his Son, and with *him* only as united to Chriſt. He perceives hereby, that if he

turn aſide from the hope exhibited in the death of Chriſt, there remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to conſume him. Under every freſh conviction of ſin, it leads the ſoul to the atonement, as its only relief. In brief, it draws off the ſoul from every falſe ſource of peace, and keeps it fixed, truſting only in the free grace of God in Chriſt.

Sixthly: the faith of the goſpel produces a *goſpel ſpirit*, or promotes the ſame mind that was in Chriſt Jeſus. The nature of a *goſpel ſpirit* has been much miſtaken. It is generally thought to conſiſt in ſome kind of an affected *ſelf-diffidence*, *tame ſubmiſſion*, and *univerſal catholiciſm*; or, in accommodating our views of the goſpel to other men's notions, and thinking all good Chriſtians, however widely their ideas of the nature and deſign of Chriſt's work may be. But the goſpel of grace creates an utter averſion to this ſpirit, and alſo to that canting, whining, fawning way, that always accompanies it, and teaches its adherents tenaciouſly to hold the truth, boldly to maintain the faith, undauntedly to reject and expoſe every attempt to pervert the goſpel, and to limit their charity to thoſe who are *of the truth*, and make it manifeſt by hearing the great Shepherd's voice, and following him. The goſpel, moſt certainly, promotes a ſpirit agreeable to its own nature, wher-ever it comes in power, for the believer, *beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, is changed into the ſame image*. A *goſpel ſpirit* is a ſpirit of humility, meekneſs, forgiveneſs, love, and compaſſion. As to humility, we have already taken a view of that which the apoſtle calls voluntary, or affected; and in regard to genuine humility, it may be juſtly ſaid, that no perſon is a partaker of it, who has not renounced thoſe refuges of lies, which the natural man flies to, and fortifies himſelf in, and as a

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naked ſinner believes on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. *Then*, and not till then, is the haughtineſs of man bowed down, and the loftineſs of man made low, when *the Lord alone is exalted.* By believing in, coming to, and depending upon, the atonement and righteouſneſs of Chriſt *alone*, for peace, ſalvation, and eternal life; the ſinner forſakes his own righteouſneſs, holineſs, tears, ſanctification, humblings, &c. This proud nature cannot bear. To do it, therefore, is the moſt humbling thing in the world, for the ſecret thought that there is ſomething good, at leaſt in the inclination, is the laſt thing a ſinner gives up; and while any ſuch thought prevails, and the ſoul is influenced accordingly, the ſpirit of pride rules in the heart. But when Chriſt is received, humility aſcends the throne, and governs in the ſoul; the ſinner then learns that there is an infinite diſproportion between what he knows, and does not know of Chriſt —the ſtrength of his faith in, and love to him—the degree of his likeneſs to his image, and his abaſement before him; and what there ought to be (from the conſideration of the *cauſe* there is for theſe things) ſo that he conſiders himſelf as the leaſt of ſaints, and abhors himſelf in duſt and aſhes. We ſhall not hear the ſinner thus taught of God, talking high things of his own love, attainments, and humility; for in the faireſt view he can take of himſelf, he ſees abundant reaſon to be aſhamed and confounded, and an abſolute need of looking to that blood which cleanſeth from all ſin:—and his demeanor will be anſwerable hereunto.

Again: the truth believed produces a ſpirit of meekneſs, which conſiſts in a readineſs to entertain all that God has ſpoken, Jam. i. 21. and a temper of mind that ſuffers injuries without ſeeking revenge; that quietly ſubmits to the will of God, and is gentle towards all men. Col. iii. 12. Tit. ii. 3. Math. xi. 29.

Of this ſpirit Jeſus was our eminent exemplar, and all his genuine diſciples, in their meaſure, copy after him. Yet let it be obſerved, that this ſpirit is by no means oppoſed to being valiant for the truth, for even the meek and lowly Jeſus, our bright example, ever oppoſed *error* with a ſteady zeal, regardleſs of the higheſt names among men: witneſs his controverſies with the Phariſees. This ſpirit of meekneſs will teach us, in all controverſies about the faith, to diſtinguiſh between *perſons* and *errors*—to avoid all bitterneſs and wrath, and evil ſpeakings, in regard to the *former*, and to ſhow the warmeſt indignation, and moſt ſteady oppoſition, to the *latter*. In ſhort, it is in perfect friendſhip with that *zeal*, which promotes univerſal boldneſs for Chriſt, and carries the friends of truth above the diſpleaſure and wrath of man.

Further: a goſpel ſpirit is a *forgiving* ſpirit. This is ſo eſſential to the Chriſtian character, that there is not the leaſt ſhadow of real godlineſs without it, Matth. xviii. 22. to the end, alſo Mark xi. 25. The great motive to this is mentioned, Col. iii. 13. But it is much to be lamented, that while many marks and evidences of believing have been given, this doctrine has been but little ſpoken of, and leſs practiſed, even amongſt the profeſſed friends of *practical godlineſs*. How often do we ſee a ſpirit of revenge in one profeſſing Chriſtian towards another, who not only let the ſun go down on their wrath, but even for days, weeks, months, and years, retain their anger; and this even among perſons of the ſame religious community! But how can ſuch perſons from their heart pray, *forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us?* How can they have fellowſhip one with another in the Lord's Supper, where the doctrine of forgiveneſs is illuſtrated, confirmed, enforced, and profeſſed? Or what proof have

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ſuch that *their* treſpaſſes are forgiven them? For upon the principles laid down, Matth. xviii. it is plain, that notwithſtanding a perſon may profeſs himſelf a ſaint, and be held in high reputation for his acquaintance with doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion; yet if he be not under the prevailing influence of this *goſpel ſpirit*, he is none of Chriſt's, Rom. viii. 9. From ſuch conſiderations as theſe, many may ſtrive, from wrong motives, and to wrong ends, to acquire this ſpirit; but it nevers enter the ſoul till the goſpel is underſtood and believed, and ſo is a part of goſpel-experience.

Once more: the knowledge of the truth promotes a genuine ſpirit of love to the brethren. For as the goſpel implants the love of God in the ſoul, ſo alſo he that loveth him that begat, loveth him alſo that is begotten, 1 John iv. 20. The ground of this love is expreſſed, 2 John, ver. 2. The rule of it, the *new commandment*, John xiii. 34. The example and motive to it, *Chriſt's love*, chap. xv. 12. and the manifeſtation of it in *deed* and in *truth*, in oppoſition to profeſſing it in *word* and in *tongue*, is the great evidence of having paſſed from death unto life, 1 John iii. 14. 18. Yet this ſpirit pays the higheſt regards to *all* the precepts of the kingdom of heaven, and leads thoſe who poſſeſs it to be faithful to their brethren, and even ſharply to reprove them, when they walk unworthy of the heavenly calling. Love will not ſuffer ſin upon the brethren. *Charity ſuffereth long, and is kind: charity envieth not: charity vaunteth not itſelf, is not puffed up, doth not behave itſelf unſeemly, ſeeketh not her own, is not eaſily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* To conclude: a *goſpel ſpirit* is a ſpirit of benevolence and compaſſion, Titus iii. 2.

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and leads to pity and relieve, as far as in our power, the poor, indigent, and afflicted, in imitation of him who went about doing good, and hereby we are followers of God as dear children. From what has before been obſerved, upon the believer's experience of the body of ſin, &c. none will imagine that it is here inſinuated, that the oppoſites of a goſpel ſpirit are totally excluded. For if they were, it would be difficult to underſtand what is meant by the followers of Chriſt denying themſelves—loſing their life—taking up their croſs—and warring againſt the fleſh. Yet, nothing can be a greater abſurdity than the notion of a *proud, ſpiteful, envious, unmerciful, hypocritical, hard-hearted* Chriſtian: though ſuch a character, making pretenſions to the Chriſtian name, may frequently be found even amongſt thoſe who bear the higheſt repute for *ſerioufneſs*, and *depth of experience!*

Laſtly: The laſt kind of Chriſtian-experience which I ſhall mention, is *practical godlineſs*; or obſerving all things whatſoever Chriſt has commanded. This has been generally ranked under the notion of *externals*, and he who ever inſiſts much, upon the importance and neceſſity of it, is ſure to procure the charge of *legality*. Even as a ſcriptural defence of the *One thing needful*, draws forth the charge of *Antinomianiſm*. But the nature of a legal ſpirit is often miſtaken, and even thoſe very perſons who are moſt zealous againſt it, are moſt frequently under the influence of it, for legality is a very ſubtle thing. If ſteadily and zealouſly maintaining, that no perſon is a Chriſtian, but he who from the ſame motives, by the ſame rule, and to the ſame end, obeys the commands of Chriſt, as the apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians did, be deemed *legal*, the writer frankly profeſſes himſelf a *ſtubborn legaliſt*. Some in the heights of their zeal for doctrinal religion, and others, amidſt their attention to

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the workings of their affections, have had but little regard, indeed ſeem almoſt to have forgotten, practical godlineſs, which is the immediate effect of true knowledge and experience. Others would ſeem to pay great regard and reverence to the kingly authority of Chriſt, who yet have taken upon them to cut and carve upon his commands, as moſt conveniently ſerves their worldly intereſt, and religious reputation. From this quarter we have heard much about what is *eſſential*, and what *non-eſſential*: what particulars we are to obey that Chriſt has commanded, and what might be left undone without incurring the cenſure of our Judge. But may we not modeſtly inquire, by what authority they do theſe things, and who gave them this authority? Indeed while the traditions of men have been mingled with the precepts and ordinances of Jeſus Chriſt, there is great propriety in diſtinguiſhing between *eſſentials* and *none-eſſentials*; and if we may be permitted to aſſume for a moment the dictator's chair, the diſtinction may ſtand thus. ALL things that Chriſt has commanded his diſciples to do, to the leaſt jot or tittle of them, we will call ESSENTIAL: and every alteration of, and addition to them, we will venture to call NON-ESSENTIAL, * or ſo many cyphers, which the diſciples of Jeſus may cenſure, expoſe, and reject at pleaſure. When it is ſaid obedience to Chriſt's commands is *eſſential*; it is not to be underſtood, that through our obedience, in any ſenſe whatever, ſalvation is obtained; but that an univerſal compliance with them is eſſential to the *fear of God*, the *love of God*, and the *obedience of faith*; and to ſay that becauſe the commands of Chriſt are not eſſential to ſalvation, therefore I will not obey, proceeds not from the Spirit of truth, but from him who firſt taught man to ſin with hope of impunity, and ſavours both

* They are not only *non-eſſentials*, but pernicious.—Ed.

both of legality and licentiouſneſs. No one who enjoys the powerful experience of the precious truth, will dare to make light of any duty the goſpel enforces; knowing that the beginning of all miſery in the world, was the breach of ſuch a *poſitive* precept, as the generality of profeſſors, in this day of refinement, would deem *trivial*, *punctilious*, *circumſtantial*, or *non-eſſential*. He therefore eſteems his word in *all* things to be right, and will not admit any ſuch diſtinction between great and ſmall in the commandments of Chriſt, as ſhall tend to make void, or caſt the leaſt contempt upon the kingly office of the Lord the Redeemer; much leſs will he preſcribe *how far* Chriſt *ought* to require obedience. And, ſurely, if there is any truth in the ſcriptures, thoſe ordinances and precepts enjoined upon, and obſerved by, the apoſtolic churches, are as much binding upon Chriſt's diſciples *now* as they were *then*; and if obedience to the New-teſtament precepts was *then*, the ſtanding rule of judging of thoſe who made pretenſions to the knowledge of Chriſt, is not the ſame rule to be obſerved *now?* It is true there may be much external appearance, where there is no true faith, and where this is the caſe, the moſt ſplendid works, however uſeful to men, are, in his ſight who judges not by outward appearance of no profit.

The inclination of the will to do whatſoever Chriſt has commanded, from thoſe motives and to thoſe ends that he requires, is the inward experience or effect, of the belief of the truth; and the external conduct, or actual performance of what the will determines, muſt of courſe be the effect, and ſo the experience, of the truth. And nothing can more properly be called *experimental-religion*, than, when Chriſt and his ways are ſet before us on the one hand; and the world

world, with its pleaſures, profits, honors, &c. on the other: and the former cannot be attended to without expoſing us to the loſs of the latter, together with ſhame, reproaches, &c. if the knowledge we have of Chriſt proves powerful to incline us to revere his authority, and makes us willing to ſuffer the loſs of all things for his ſake; chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a reaſon; this is a proper *experience* of the truth and power of what we believe. And all experience without this is worſe than nothing. If a man ſay, he loves his brother for the ſake of the truth, and yet ſees him in need, and ſhuts up his bowels of compaſſion from him, it is plain he has no experience of the love of God dwelling in him. He profeſſes, it may be, to know the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who, tho' he was rich, yet for our ſakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich, but when he ſees his brother in needy circumſtances, he finds no heart to imitate the divine goodneſs; from whence it is plain, that he does not ſtand *in the true grace of God.* He profeſſes to truſt in the Lord, but in refuſing to lend unto him, by giving unto the poor, the hypocriſy of his profeſſion is laid ſufficiently open; it is plain he truſts in uncertain riches, and not in the living God, and his heart goes after covetouſneſs.—*They* know moſt of *goſpel-experience* who are moſt devoted in their lives to God; who are of a humble, meek, forgiving, loving, compaſſionate ſpirit, who deny themſelves for the ſake of Chriſt, and to promote the welfare of his church; who walk with God in their families, provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men, obſerve the things Chriſt has commanded, and count all things but loſs for the excellent knowledge of HIM. But alas! inſtead of the generality

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of profeſſors proving their *faith* by their *works*, they offer no better evidence of it than either a confident aſſertion that they have exerted the appropriating act, or a long detail of their convictions, diſcoveries, experiences, and ſo on; all of which amount to nothing more than what the apoſtle James ſtiles a man's SAYING he has faith; which, in fact, is no evidence at all, unleſs it be confirmed by a good converſation. *

SECTION III.

WHEREIN SOME QUESTIONS ARE STATED AND CONSIDERED RELATIVE TO THE SENTIMENT CONTAINED IN THIS ESSAY.

QUESTION. I.

"ARE there no further joys to be experienced, than what ariſe from the hope of the goſpel?"

Anſwer. There are no true joys but the joys of the Holy Ghoſt; and the only way in which he leads to joy unſpeakable and full of glory, is by teſtifying of the things of Chriſt which are written in the word of truth: ſo that unleſs the joys which we have are founded upon, or flow from, the hope ſet before us in the goſpel, we have great reaſon to think they are not

* The laſt edition of theſe eſſays contained an extract from the Kentiſh aſſociation letter, 1782, which concluded this ſection. This extract is now omitted, and that the reader may have all deſirable ſatisfaction as to the cauſe, he is informed that Mr. Ecking, not long before his deceaſe, ſignified his diſapprobation of it to the editor of this, as well as his deſign of leaving it out, ſhould he live to publiſh another impreſſion.—He thought ſome things in it unguardedly expreſſed, and conſequently very liable to abuſe.—Ed.

not the joys of the Holy Ghoſt. Rom. v. 3. 1 Cor. xiii. 6. Pſalm v. 11. But it will be inquired, "Am I to take no joy from perceiving the work of God in my ſoul diſtinguiſhing me from others? And can I come to no no other certainty of my perſonal intereſt in Chriſt, than what ariſes from the belief of the goſpel proclaimed equally to all?" * In reply to this, it is needful to inquire, whether your conſcience bear witneſs before God, who knoweth all things, that Chriſt, as the free refuge of the guilty, is your only hope, the free promiſe of life through his name, your only encouragement to draw near to God, and his righteouſneſs, your only title to heaven. If this be not the caſe, it is in vain for you to look for any other kind of joy; for it is impoſſible there ſhould be any diſtinguiſhing evidences, or genuine experience in the ſoul, till Chriſt is formed there the hope of glory; without this all our duties are legal aud ſelfiſh, and our hope and experience deluſive. But if you have the teſtimouy of your conſcience before God, that the blood of Chriſt gives you peace, and that all the bleſſings you hope for, are viewed as *the reward of his work*; if the free goſpel comforts, quickens, and rejoices your heart, then you muſt be in a meaſure conſcious, that Chriſt alone is your life, light, peace and joy; and that of courſe a vital union is formed between your ſoul and him; and this being accompanied by the genuine ſpirit of the goſpel, and the fruits of righteouſneſs, it is confirmed, ſo far as this evidence goes, that you are born of God; and to the truth of this the Holy Spirit bears witneſs, by

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* The anſwer to this queſtion ſhould be well attended to, as it ſets forth the way in which believers attain to the full aſſurance of hope, or of their perſonal intereſt in Chriſt; and the rather, as ſeveral expreſſions in the foregoing eſſays ſeem, at firſt ſight, to ſet aſide the medium of proof here ſtated, but which the author could not intend in that view.—Ed.

ſhowing that theſe are the genuine internal and external effects of underſtanding the truth of Chriſt, under a conſciouſneſs of which, you may rejoice that *your* name is written in heaven; bleſs God for his diſtinguiſhing grace, and take comfort from, and rejoice in, the doctrines of election, final perſeverance, and eternal glorification. But even in this the true believer does not loſe ſight of the common ſalvation, nor does he build his aſſurance of eternal life, either upon his experiences, or the fruits of his life. This is an important point of doctrine, and ſhould be well conſidered.

The believer is aſſured, by the goſpel teſtimony, that eternal life is inſeparably connected with the belief of the truth; ſo that he that believes SHALL be ſaved. He looks upon the genuine effects of the goſpel, only as proving *his* connection with Chriſt, or that he is a child of God by faith in him, and then juſtly argues, *If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Chriſt.* He does not view his experience or obedience as an intervening righteouſneſs intitling him to Chriſt and eternal life, and therefore does not aſſure himſelf of reigning in life by virtue of them; nor yet does he appropriate heaven, &c. without evidence either from ſcripture, ſenſe, or reaſon, thathe has a right to make ſuch a claim. The Chriſtian's hope of eternal life is founded upon HIS word, who cannot lie; but unleſs there is ſubſtantial evidence of a perſonal connection with Chriſt, the aſſurance thereof is groundleſs and vain; for as the goſpel aſcertains the certainty of eternal ſalvation to none but believers of the truth, ſo unleſs we have the witneſs of the Spirit of God with our ſpirits (Rom. viii. 16, 1 John iii. 20. 21.) that we are of the truth, our aſſurance that Chriſt ſhed his blood for us in particular, and that of courſe eternal life is infallibly ours, is

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void of ſcriptural foundation. As the firſt Epiſtle of John was profeſſedly written that *believers may know* that they have eternal life, the beſt way will be to take no man's opinion about the way by which we are to come to this knowledge, but each for himſelf conſult that Epiſtle. We have been told by thoſe who deny the neceſſity of the work of the Holy Spirit, to make the goſpel effectual, that "the appropriating act is neceſſary to a conſciouſneſs, knowledge, and enjoyment of the divine righteouſneſs," which is conſiſtent enough with their own plan; becauſe as that righteouſneſs ſtands in the ſcripture, it is proclaimed indefinitely to the world, and therefore muſt need ſome power to give it efficacy to individuals, and they maintain, as above, that their appropriating act does this; whereas all who are taught of God in hearing the divine report concerning this righteouſneſs, well know that it is not any working of their mind (whether it be called acting faith, appropriation, or by any other name) that gives knowledge, conſciouſneſs, or enjoyment of it; but that the Spirit of truth, taking of the things of Chriſt which are written, and opening the underſtanding thereby, performs every divine operation, and draws forth every evangelical act, whether of mind or body. But if any profeſſor of the goſpel ſo far forgets the only ground of hope and confidence before God, as to take pleaſure in the exerciſes of his own mind, and lives by his experiences, or the change within him, he ſo far is guilty of criminal indulgences, and rejoices in the fleſh; which cannot be done but at the expence of turning aſide from Chriſt.

QUESTION II.

"What are the proper uſes believers ſhould make of their experiences?"—It has before been ſhown

what the genuine experience of the goſpel is, and its happy and ſalutary effects upon the practice; the ſum of which is, that the ATONEMENT known and believed, gives reſt to the guilty conſcience; the ſaved ſinner lives daily by his faith, or that which the dying Redeemer declared FINISHED, and walks as becometh the goſpel of Chriſt. Without theſe things are more or leſs known by us, we are not, at preſent, Chriſtians: we have no right to believe that we are ſo our ſelves, nor has any one authority to believe it of us. Not the *former*, becauſe the witneſs of our conſcience, and that of the Spirit of God, are againſt us: to perſuade ourſelves of it, therefore, is not only to believe without evidence, which is abſurd, but alſo againſt the ſtrongeſt evidence to the contrary. Not the *latter*, becauſe the rule given to judge and be judged by, is—*By their fruits ye ſhall know them.* Without noticing the uſe commonly made of falſe joys, falſe confidence, &c. it may be obſerved that a believer might make the following uſe of his experiences, viz. (1ſt) What inward experience he has of the body of ſin and death, the oppoſition of the fleſh to the goſpel, and the deceitfulneſs, pride, and enmity of his heart, ſhould be uſed as a prevailing argument for the neceſſity of looking daily to the blood of Chriſt, for healing, cleanſing, and pardon. (2) The trials in Providence that he meets with, the loſſes, diſappointments, perſecutions, and ſufferings, which he is called to endure, ſhould be uſed as ſo many proofs that this is not his reſt, that he ſhould not lay up for himſelf treaſure upon the earth, but be daily *Looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* (3) The precious, peaceful, and comfortable experience of the truth, he ſhould uſe as a confirming evidence of the goſpel, which he has believed upon the teſtimony of God. For he finds

finds that to be true by bleſſed experience that he before received upon the authority of ſcripture. John iv. 42. chap. viii. 30—32. (4) He may alſo uſe his experience of the goſpel, both his peace of conſcience and his obſervance of thoſe things that Chriſt has commanded, as a proof that his faith is not falſe or feigned, nor his hope in Chriſt vain. Rom. v. 1. 1 John ii. 3. (5) He may uſe his experience to lead him to the *cauſe* of it, when he needs a revival of it in his ſoul. But here let me be underſtood: I do not mean that he ſhould renew his enjoyments by reflecting upon his former experiences; or that upon the ground of them, or through them, either as a medium, occaſion, or circumſtance, he ſhould argue his right, or make his claim to preſent comfort; but ſimply this is intended; namely, that he may trace the ſtreams up to the fountain; or by recollecting that Chriſt and his ſalvation are the ſource of all joy, peace, reſt, and comfort, when he feels the want of theſe things he may apply to Chriſt to renew them, under the ſame character, upon the ſame ground, and with the ſame views as he at firſt looked unto him for ſalvation. All who are taught of God, are taught, as guilty ſinners, conſtantly to live by the Righteouſneſs of the Redeemer, which is perfectly conſiſtent with a full perſuaſion of perſonal intereſt in him.

QUESTION III.

"Does the goſpel hope admit of taking relief, under freſh charges of guilt upon the conſcience, from any former works or experiences; or any preſent feelings or reſolutions?" From what has been already obſerved, it is anſwered in the *negative*; for

if any thing appears in the temper and walk of a profeſſor, that the word of God condemns; he ought on that account to examine himſelf whether he be in the faith, according to 2 Cor. xiii. 5. and indeed if but a ſmall portion of the fear of God be before his eyes, and his conſcience remain tender, a ſuſpicion of this will force itſelf upon his mind, whether he chuſes to entertain it or no. But the queſtion requires a more diſtinct reply. (1) There is nothing that perſons are more deceived in than their *feelings*. Chriſt tells us of ſome whoſe joy, while it laſted, no one could queſtion the truth of. Math. xiii. 20. Luke iv. 20—30. And have not we ſeen many making a ſhining profeſſion of religion, perſons who have been high in our eſteem as Chriſtians, and the relation of whoſe experiences has often given us pleaſure, who yet have turned back, and been a ſad diſgrace to religion, yea even to ſociety? And is it not plain from hence, and abundantly confirmed by the word of God, that profeſſors may have falſe hopes, falſe confidence, falſe comforts, and falſe joys, even while they have made the cleareſt profeſſion in words? And if this be the caſe, then would it not be confirming the deluſion, and ſealing the deſtruction of ſuch, to endeavour to comfort them, and cauſe them to think well of their ſtate from their former ſuppoſed experiences, or works, or preſent deſires, or reſolutions? But to ſay the beſt of this method, it is *uncertain*, and therefore uncomfortable and unſafe; for ſeeing there have been perſons who have been deceived this way, the leaders of this people ſet themſelves to divide and ſub-divide betwixt this *kind* of conviction, and the other—theſe kind of deſires, repentances, and faith, and thoſe which have been diſproved; yet, after all, many are held in ſad

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ſuſpenſe through life, and awfully prove the deficiency of this hope and comfort in death! And as few are capable of making the neceſſary diſtinctions, their comfort, in general, depends upon their leaders, not upon God's teſtimony.—But (2) The preſent ſituation the mind is ſuppoſed to be in, is an objection to this method of procedure. For this ſtate of mind renders a former *real* experience *apparently* deluſive, and ſo cannot give relief: no not even upon the ſuppoſition that a perſuaſion of our election will give peace to a guilty conſcience: Becauſe the very ground of the propoſed encouragement, or ſource of relief, is called in queſtion; and indeed if under a ſenſe of guilt any can take relief from their paſt experience, that very ſatisfaction which he finds ſhould lead him to ſuſpect the truth of his faith, hope and experience. For our paſt experiences are no otherwiſe evidenced to be the true joys of faith, and the real comforts of the Holy Ghoſt, than as the ſoul is diſpoſed thereby to look directly to Chriſt alone for peace, when his conſcience is charged with freſh guilt. (3) To make uſe of any former works or experiences, or any preſent feelings or reſolutions to this end, is *in its own nature* wrong. I ſuppoſe it will be admitted that freſh-contracted guilt tends to work in the ſoul fear, darkneſs, and diſtreſs, which, as before obſerved, render a former *real* experience *apparently* deluſive. But if this were not the caſe, can our paſt experiences, however genuine, remove the *ground* of our preſent fear, darkneſs, and diſtreſs? If ſo, then we have found out ſomething different from the blood of Chriſt, that can cleanſe us from all ſin! But ſuppoſing it poſſible, that a retroſpect of our paſt experiences could remove the preſent ſenſe of guilt, &c. what ſenſe can we make of ſuch an addreſs to believ-

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ers as the following, AS *ye have therefore received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord*, SO *walk ye in him*. Col. ii. 6. A ſinner does not at *firſt* receive Chriſt thro' the medium of his experiences, or upon the ground of his own working, under any conſideration whatever; but rather as freely given for a ſanctuary to the diſtreſſed, and the hope of the unqualified and guilty. If then, when guilt burthens the conſcience again, we can get relief from any other quarter, then we did at firſt; that is, through any other medium than the goſpel of the grace of God, we muſt certainly obtain it at the expence of turning out of the way to God; and inſtead of *holding the beginning of our confidence* (which if well-founded muſt be in Chriſt) *ſteadfaſt unto the end*, as we are exhorted, Heb. iii. 14. we are *moved away from the hope of the goſpel*, Col. i. 23. to another hope and another goſpel: *Which indeed is not another*; *but there be ſome that trouble you, and would* PERVERT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. (Gal. i. 6. 9.) In ſhort, if a believer can at any time take relief in this way, to ſay the leaſt of it, he does not obey the exhortation to walk in Chriſt AS he firſt received him. But it muſt be acknowledged this method of giving peace to the guilty conſcience, is conſiſtent enough with that doctrine which teaches the neceſſity of certain pre-requiſites to qualify us for receiving Chriſt. But, (4) this method tends to give us ſlight notions of ſin; which is a ſufficient argument againſt it, if no other could be urged. It leads profeſſors to think that *their* ſins are not infinitely criminal, and as ſuch deſerve the wrath of God: which ſentiment is purely *Antinomian*, and ſo, is oppoſed to Jehovah's moral government. Nor can any perſon have the fear of God before his eyes, who entertains ſuch thoughts of ſin. If every defect in loving God with all our hearts is infinitely

infinitely criminal, as without doubt it is, then the fear ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of it cannot be removed by any thing leſs, than an atonement of infinite dignity and worth. Hence we may ſee one reaſon, why the Chriſtian ſhould live daily by the faith of the Son of God. (5) There is no *occaſion* for ſuch a procedure. For even while we view nothing about ourſelves, but what leads to deſpair, yet againſt all hope from *within ourſelves*, we may believe in hope of what is ſet before us *in the goſpel*. It cannot be proved, by any logical deduction, of one propoſition from another, or a taking for granted certain premiſes, and then drawing rational concluſions from them, that we are believers in Chriſt, unleſs we reſt in the perſuaſion, that *He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come unto God by him*, and that the goſpel is good tidings of great joy to ALL PEOPLE; and if the ſufficiency and freeneſs of the Redeemer's work is believed; and thereby a perſuaſion ariſes in the ſoul from the faithfulneſs of God, that whoſoever believeth ſhall be ſaved; that perſon will find no neceſſity to look to any other quarter for peace. But if our knowledge and belief of theſe things do not bring peace, without doubt we do not believe them; or to ſpeak the moſt cautiouſly, we have our minds ſadly clouded about them. In ſhort, if we could reconcile our minds, to attend to the direction of God himſelf, we ſhould ſee that he propoſes nothing, to renew or revive the peace and joy of the moſt eminent ſaint, but that which he ſets before the moſt guilty ſinner, which may be ſeen, 2 Cor. xii. 8. 9. Rev. i. 17. 18.

Obj. "But did not David in a time of trouble and ſorrow ſeek comfort and peace in referring to his paſt experiences?" (Pſalm xlii. 5, 11. Pſalm xliii. 5.) In reply to this it may be obſerved, that theſe pſalms ſeem to have been compoſed by the ſame author, and upon

upon the ſame occaſion: probably David was the author of them, who at this time was baniſhed from the Houſe of God, either by Saul's tyranny, or Abſalom's rebellion. He longs to be reſtored to the worſhip of God, with as much ardour as the long-chaſed hart, ready to expire, pants for the water-brooks. He looks back to the happineſs he was uſed to enjoy in going to the houſe of the Lord, and contraſts it with his preſent forlorn ſituation: the effect whereof is, that *his ſoul is caſt down within him.* However, he is far from looking to, or expecting help from, *himſelf* or any *human aids*; but in the midſt of his grief he encourages himſelf *in the Lord.* He looks to his works of providence (ver. 6.) which are the ground upon which he exhorts his ſoul to (ver. 1.) *hope in God*; even as he at another time ſays, "Becauſe thou has been my help, therefore under the ſhadow of thy wings will I rejoice." If therefore this might be applied to Chriſtian experience, it is a ſuitable direction in what way we ſhould proceed to renew our comforts (viz.) looking from ourſelves, and upon the ground of the faithful word, which records the mighty acts of the Lord, hope in his mercy, and confide in his veracity.

The penman of Pſalm lxxvii. had ſo far forgot himſelf, as to look to his former experiences to relieve him, under the ſenſe of preſent guilt, but found the method fail in the trial. Ver. 1—4. he gives a diſtreſſing view of that which troubled his conſcience, and ver. 5, 6. he tries what looking to his paſt enjoyments would do for him. *I have conſidered the days of old, the years of antient times. I call to remembrance my ſong in the night: I commune with mine own heart, and my ſpirit made diligent ſearch.* Thus we ſee he took the ſame method that is commonly recommended to, and practiſed by, profeſſors in our day.

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But his conſcience was too ſenſibly affected with the wrath that lay upon it, to take comfort from any ſuch quarter—ſtill he complains, ver. 7, 9. Convinced in the trial of the folly of this method, he acknowledges his error, ver. 10. *And I ſaid this is my infirmity.* He tries another expedient, ver. 10—20. this is oppoſed to ver. 5, 6. This method then is quite the reverſe of the former. Inſtead of looking to his former experience, his ſong in the night, &c. he looks now to the wonderful works of God, which were a type of the ſpiritual redemption by the greateſt of all the divine works. If then we count the pſalmiſt a pattern worthy to be imitated, let us follow his example, ceaſe from this former fruitleſs method of looking for relief, and renew our joys, by looking to the *finiſhed work* of the Redeemer.

To conclude: to know the truth as it is in Jeſus, is to be *wiſe unto ſalvation.* To experience its genuine influences upon our ſouls, is to be *truly happy.* And to contend earneſtly for it, againſt every oppoſition to it, or ſubtle corruption of it, is the Chriſtian's higheſt honour. To profeſs the faith without enjoying the genuine effects of it, is to have the *form* without the *power* of godlineſs. To talk of experience without a ſcriptural knowledge of the Son of God, is *mere enthuſiaſm.* And the moſt flaming profeſſion of knowledge and experience, without obſerving the things that Chriſt has commanded, is nothing better than a miſerable deluſion.

THE FAITH OF DEVILS CONSIDERED.

PREFACE.

THE Scripture informs us, that the Devils confeſſed Jeſus to be the Chriſt, the Son of God, Luke iv. 41. but we cannot well ſuppoſe that God extorted this confeſſion from them in order to confirm that truth. Jeſus never refers men to the teſtimony of Devils for a proof of his divine miſſion; on the contrary, both he and his apoſtles had the utmoſt averſion to their teſtimony, and commanded them to hold their peace, Mark i. 25, 34. Luke iv. 41. Acts xvi. 18. Far leſs can we ſuppoſe that Devils confeſſed Chriſt with a view that men ſhould believe on him; for this would be Satan divided againſt himſelf, and voluntarily overturning his own kingdom; whereas his buſineſs is to blind the minds of them that believe not, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt ſhould ſhine unto them, 2 Cor. iv. 4. It is therefore moſt probable, that theſe confeſſions were intended by Satan to diſcredit that precious truth which is the ſum of the whole goſpel, and the ſole foundation of hope to guilty men. And if this was Satan's deſign, he has not been altogether diſappointed; for though every profeſſor of the Chriſtian religion will readily admit that what the Devils confeſſed is a truth; yet many deny it to be the ſaving truth, or that ſalvation

is connected with the belief of it; and the reaſon they give is, that the very Devils confeſſed and believed this truth without reaping any benefit from it, and men cannot be ſaved by the faith of Devils. Thus the grand enemy of mankind, by confeſſing the truth, has made men to undervalue it, as a thing which cannot profit them, and has ſet them in ſearch of ſomething elſe for a ground of hope which it is ſuppoſed Devils cannot believe. By this means they are alſo led to conceive, that true faith is "not ſimply the "*believing* of any ſentence that is written, or that "can be thought upon;" but ſome good motion or diſpoſition of the will and affections towards Chriſt, of which Devils are incapable. So that both the *TRUTH* itſelf, and the ſimple *belief* of it, are in a great meaſure ſet aſide, in order to keep clear of the faith of Devils.

THE author of the following pages, ſenſible of the odium caſt upon the faith of God's elect, and of the deep prejudices conceived againſt it, by this diabolical artifice, had in a former publication aſſerted, "That whoſoever among men believes WHAT Devils "do, about the Son of God, is born of God, and "ſhall be ſaved." This it ſeems gave offence to many, which occaſioned his writing what follows, as a further explanation of the above propoſition. His death, which happened ſoon after, prevented its being publiſhed at that time; but it is now preſented to the public, exactly copied from the manuſcript which he left behind him.

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FAITH OF DEVILS, &c.

"*Let us alone, what have WE to do with thee thou*
"Jeſus *of Nazareth?—Art thou come to deſtroy us?*
"I know thee who thou art, *the Holy One of God.*
Mark i. 24.

—"*Devils came out of many, crying out and ſaying,*
"Thou art Chriſt the Son of the living God."
Luke iv. 41.

AMONG the various methods which the enemies of the ſaving truth of the goſpel have adopted to ſhew their contempt of it, none have ſerved their purpoſes better, than denominating it "*The faith of Devils.*" When the ignorant multitude inquire who they are that are ſo ſtupid as to think the faith of *Devils* can ſave them; their leaders have nothing more to do than fix the charge upon thoſe who they wiſh their deluded followers to ſhun, and their end is accompliſhed. For as every body is afraid of the *Devil*, it may be readily thought, that people will ſhun thoſe who have nothing better for the their juſtification, and the ground of their hope, than *what Devils* know and believe.

As the author of theſe lines has elſewhere aſſerted, to the no ſmall ſurprize and diſguſt of many ſerious people, * that "whoſoever *among men* believes "WHAT Devils do about the Son of God, is born "of God, and ſhall be ſaved;" he takes the liberty

* Eſſay on Faith, &c. page 113.

to preſent them with a few more thoughts on the ſubject, which will either heighten their ſurprize and diſguſt, or convince them that their former ſentiments were founded in ignorance, either of the creed of Devils, or the ſalvation of ſinners; or both.

The writer declines entering upon a metaphyſical diſquiſition of the exiſtence and nature of Devils; as alſo that abſtruſe ſubject, the *origin of evil*; yet cannot well avoid juſt glancing at thoſe words of Chriſt in John viii. 44. becauſe they have ſome relation to the *Creed of Devils*. It is entirely out of my province to ſay how evil firſt entered the mind of a pure intelligence; but, to me, the paſſage before us ſeems to point out the nature of Satan's apoſtacy—"He abode not in *the Truth*." Now it is plain that "*The Truth*," here referred to, is that which Abraham believed and rejoiced in, ver. 56, and which thoſe unbelieving Jews hated, and put Jeſus to death, as a blaſphemer, for confeſſing.—"*For he ſaid, I am* "*the Son of God.*"—"*Becauſe thou, being a man,* "*makeſt thyſelf God.*" In doing which they did the works of the Devil, and ſo ſhewed themſelves to be his children.

It appears then, that *Satan* had ſome intimation that God was to be manifeſted in *human nature*; and it is probable that it was given the angels, when man was made in the *image of God:* but, however that may be, it appears, from the above Scripture, that the mind of this angelic Chief was not well affected to it—and that he fell by apoſtatizing from it. When the fulneſs of time was come for God to be manifeſted in the fleſh, to bruiſe the ſerpent's head; when the voice from heaven had declared, in reference to IMMANUEL, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed:* Satan, the leader of the diſaffection to this plan of manifeſting the divine Glory, met him

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in the Wilderneſs to combat *the Truth*, that had been declared from Heaven; and to uſe all his power and ſagacity to overthrow it: But found himſelf foiled in the attack; and, being overcome, he withdrew. From hence it is plain, that the Devil knew who Jeſus was—what was ſpoken of him in the Old Teſtament, and what he came to work. If this wants further proof it may be had from the following words—"He ſuffered them not to ſpeak, for *they* "*knew that he was Chriſt.*" If we further conſider—the ſagacity of the evil ſpirits—the opportunities they have had of hearing the ſcriptures—the readineſs of Satan, when tempting Jeſus, to quote the word that was written of him—his ability to transform himſelf into an Angel of Light, and the lead he takes in deceiving the nations by falſe religions; we ſhall have no reaſon to imagine that the Devils are deficient in any one point of ſcripture knowledge. And one has juſtly obſerved "That though they endeavour to "ſeduce men into hereſies, they are too well informed "to be ſpeculatively heterodox themſelves."

But though this be plainly the caſe, it is equally true, that their knowledge is of no ſervice to them; but on the contrary heightens their torment. The reaſon is obvious. God was not manifeſted in the angelic nature, "for verily he took not on him the "nature of Angels; but he took on him the ſeed of Abraham." He did not come into the world to deliver the fallen Angels from thoſe awful chains of darkneſs in which they are bound; but he took hold on the human nature to deliver the ſeed of Abraham from the wrath to come. Hence the Redemption of Chriſt is publiſhed in the Scriptures, for the ſalvation of men; but not for the ſalvation of the fallen Angels. The Truths that Devils believe, therefore, do not contain their own ſalvation in them; elſe

their believing would be accompanied with *joy*, *peace*, *love* and *obedience*. This they very well know, and therefore ſay, while they acknowledge him *the Chriſt* the *Holy one of God*, "What have WE to do with "thee? Art thou come to *deſtroy* US?"—Seeing then that the deſtruction of Devils is contained in the teſtimony of Jeſus, it is not to he wondered at, that their belief of it is attended with *terror* and *dreadful horror*; even as the law worketh wrath in the conſcience of thoſe who are convinced of being breakers of it, and ſo deſerving the curſe. But we may ſafely ſay, that unleſs the Devils believed that the Teſtimony concerning Jeſus is *the truth of God*; and unleſs ſinners believed the truth of the threatened wrath; neither the one nor the other would fear and tremble. From hence I conclude, that Devils do believe "The "teſtimony that God has given of his Son;" and do alſo experience the genuine effects of it, so FAR AS THAT TESTIMONY CONCERNS THEM.

Having ſhewn, in general, what Devils do believe; let us again advert to the obnoxious propoſition, "Whoſoever, *among men*, believes WHAT Devils do "about the Son of God, is born of God, and ſhall "be ſaved." One would have thought that whatever diſguſt aroſe in the minds of the religious in reading this propoſition, that ſome degree of reverence would have been paid to the ſcripture produced in favour of it, 1 John v. 1, "Whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God." From which it plainly appears, that the propoſition of the Eſſay-writer, and that of the apoſtle John, muſt ſtand or fall together; and that if the one ſtands in need of correction, the other does ſo alſo; for it can hardly be ſuppoſed, after what has been ſaid above, that any one will deny that the Devils believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt. The objector, therefore, is driven to this alternative, viz. either

either to confeſs that WHAT Devils believe, without being profited by it, is the ſame that believing ſinners are begotten again by, and ſaved from wrath through; or, that what conſtitutes the *eſſence* of juſtifying faith, and ſaves us, is the *manner* of believing. In regard to the *former*, I would know, whether the ſaved ſinner believes any truth that Devils do not believe? If they do, what is it? Is it replied, that men ſee and believe that Devils have nothing to do with ſalvation, whereas every believer ſees and believes his own ſalvation contained in the report? This I preſume is the moſt formidable objection. I aſk then, do not Devils believe this alſo? Do not they know that their own ſalvation is not contained in the record, but that the ſalvation of all that believe is? I can hardly ſuppoſe any one will deny this. And as to the *latter*, I call upon the objector to ſhow, that there is any other *manner* of knowing and believing a truth, among intelligent creatures, than by underſtanding it, and being perſuaded of its reality and truth.

As to the *effects* that any teſtimony has, in conſequence of underſtanding and believing it, that is quite another thing. But let us take a cloſer view of the ſubject before us. It is pretty generally agreed among profeſſing Chriſtians, that *Chriſt* is the *only* Saviour of ſinners: and herein they agree with the apoſtles, who declared that, *There is ſalvation in none other*. But then a material difference ariſes between them, when they come to particularize their views of ſalvation by Chriſt alone. I have only, at preſent, to aſcertain the apoſtolic notion of this ſubject; or to ſhew *what* that is which delivers ſinners from *the wrath to come*, and brings them to the eternal enjoyment of the divine favour. The doctrine of the inſpired witneſſes is this:—*That when the fulneſs of the time was come, God ſent forth his Son made of a woman, made under*

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the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law. And *We have redemption in his blood—the forgiveneſs of ſins according to the riches of his grace. Thus Chriſt has redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us.* And as to that by which juſtification unto eternal life is obtained, *the word* thus ſpeaketh, *Chriſt is the end of the law for righteouſneſs, to every one that believeth,* as it is written, *In the Lord ſhall all the ſeed of Iſrael be juſtified and ſhall glory*; for, *their righteouſneſs is of me ſaith the Lord. All that believe,* therefore, *are juſtified from all things from which they could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes.* The apoſtles account for theſe things by ſhowing, that *Chriſt was made ſin for us, who knew no ſin, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him.* The *ſole* requiſite then to juſtification unto eternal life, is the work which Chriſt wrought in his life, completed in his death, and proved its all-ſufficiency, and God's good pleaſure in it for that purpoſe, in his reſurrection from the dead. Now ſinners can have no knowledge of that grace, which reigns through this righteouſneſs unto eternal life by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, but by the BIBLE, which is the only revelation that God has given of it: and from that book only, through ſupernatural inſtruction. And the work of Chriſt is accounted for righteouſneſs in believing, Rom. iv. chap. x. James i. 18. The divine word does not take effect through any previous good diſpoſitions inclining them to ſerioufneſs, &c. but *God who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, ſhines into the heart, and gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt,* 2 Cor. iv. 6. Acts xxvi. 18. Iſaiah lv. 10, 11. then, and not till then, a ſinner is born of God, juſtified, ſanctified, and ſaved. But does he know any thing now that Devils do not know, or believe

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any thing that they do not believe? The ſum of what has been ſaid above, is included in Simon Peter's confeſſion, Math. xvi. 16. *Thou art Chriſt the Son of the living God*—and in John's propoſition, "He that "believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God," 1 John iv. 15. and chap. v. 1. and have we not ſeen that Devils have confeſſed the ſame glorious truth, Mark i. 24. Luke iv. 41. Does not *Chriſt* tell Peter that he had been taught that truth of the Father, and was bleſſed through the knowledge of it? As it is written, "Bleſſed is the people that know the joyful ſound." And does not *John*, under divine inſpiration, declare, that ſuch ſinners are born of God? And what more does the writer declare in the propoſition cavilled at?

But though that teſtimony which ſinners believe and are ſaved by, is nothing more than fallen ſpirits believe; yet as it wears a very different aſpect towards the one than towards the other, it has, of courſe, very different effects. The Devils hear the goſpel revelation, and, without doubt, clearly underſtand that *Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners* of the human race; and that in performing this work for them, he has bruiſed the Serpent's head—deſtroyed the works of the Devil, and delivered ſinners from his ſervice and dominion. The genuine effects of the belief of theſe truths, on them, muſt be enmity, hatred, and torment. Sinners of the human race, believing the ſame record, perceive and are aſſured of the pardon of ſin, reconciliation to God, deliverance from all condemnation, and free juſtification to eternal life, to all that believe; the genuine effects of which will be peace, joy, hope, love, and thankfulneſs.

If we conſider men and Devils lying in the ſame common ſtate of juſt condemnation; then the different effects of *the ſame teſtimony*, will be ſimilar to what

what we may ſuppoſe would take place, if there were two felons under ſentence of death, and the King's pleaſure ſhould be read in their hearing, reprieving and fully forgiving the one, and fixing the day for the execution of the other. Would not the ſame teſtimony give joy to the one, and enlarge the torment of the other? Or if we conſider Satan exerciſing tyranny over the human race, as the taſk-maſters in Egypt did over Iſrael, or as a powerful tyrant does over his ſlaves; then the report of a mighty conqueror, having irreſiſtible power, coming to inflict vengeance on the tyrant, and to ſet the ſlaves at liberty, if there is inconteſtible evidence of the truth of it, both will believe; but the effects, we may ſuppoſe, would be widely different. Even ſo the Devils believe the Goſpel Teſtimony and tremble, dreadful horror ſeizes them; while ſinners believe the joyful ſound and rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory. Thus we ſee that *the ſame truth* that torments Devils ſaves believing ſinners.

But why do people make objections to that which is ſo obvious in the ſcriptures? The reaſon is plain. Self-righteouſneſs and unbelief are at the bottom. The work which Chriſt finiſhed in his death, reported in the word of Truth, is not thought, *in itſelf*, ſufficient to juſtify the ungodly, and to give the *mere* ſinner peace and joy as ſoon as he believes it. The objection goes upon the ſuppoſition, that there muſt be, if not good works, yet ſome good diſpoſitions in the mind to make our believing of the *right ſort*. So that upon this plan the ſeriouſneſs, heartineſs, ſteadfaſtneſs, &c. of the perſon's mind in believing, diſtinguiſh his faith from all other *kinds*; in ſhort, makes it *juſtifying faith*. It will be allowed, that man is a ſinner, and undeſerving of the favour of God, but then it is thought that *Grace* either common or ſaving

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3. Devils believe that the ſalvation of men is contained in the goſpel; yet they do not believe that Chriſt is *willing* to ſave *them*. Even ſo, many who are eſteemed as convinced, ſeriouſly diſpoſed people, and as having, what is called "the good work" begun in them, or, as others chuſe to phraſe it, are partakers of "initial ſalvation;" believe that Chriſt is both able and willing to ſave *others*, but through their great humility! (which in fact is intolerable pride and unbelief) are led to fear that Chriſt is not *willing* to ſave *them*. This kind of *rant*, of which there is plenty in various forms in the religious world, is occaſioned by their natural bias to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, and the unſcriptural methods whereby their leaders retail their *perverted goſpels*. It is plain, therefore, that their faith is no better than that of Devils, it being of no more uſe to them than theirs is. Indeed it is worſe: for, as we have ſeen, the ſalvation of Devils is not contained in the goſpel record, while that of men is.

But what ſhall we ſay of their pretended faith, who, in hearing the revelation of God, neither *rejoice*, nor *tremble*, but harden their hearts until their conſcience becomes ſeared as with a hot iron? Surely this is more dreadful than any thing yet mentioned; but awful as it is, it is far from being uncommon.

From the whole, let us take heed of agreeing with thoſe who hate the truth, leſt we be found to be deſpiſers of "*The moſt holy Faith*," and, as ſuch, when it is too late to be delivered from wrath by it,—"*wonder and periſh.*"

CONFESSION OF FAITH, &c.

THAT there is a God I believe, not from tradition, but from the ſtrongeſt evidences ariſing from the things which he has made. But I am happy in not being left either to the dictates of natural reaſon or philoſophy, to obtain the knowledge of this ſupreme and glorious Being, but have the ſacred lines of revelation, which lead me into his *more* glorious works, in which I diſcern his real character.

The external evidences of the Bible being the word of God, are many; but its own intrinſic evidence is moſt glorious and ſatisfactory to me. But I am called upon to ſhew what I have been taught from theſe ſacred pages. In reading the account given there of *Creation*, my mind is ſtruck with a different view of the DEITY, than philoſophy can furniſh me with, or help me to comprehend. Indeed, I there find it confirmed, that JEHOVAH is the one infinite, almighty, and eternal God: but am alſo informed, that the *one* divine eſſence has revealed himſelf, in order to exalt his own glory, and lay a proper baſis of hope for his people, in *three diſtinct perſonal characters*, viz. Father, Word, and Spirit; in *each* of which he diſplays every divine perfection. The chief object of this lower creation is MAN. Adam was made in the image of God, and was, by the great Creator, diſtinguiſhed from all other creatures, by giving him the

the knowledge of his Maker. From which knowledge he drew the reaſons of his conduct, and became conſcious of the divine favour, ſo long as he obeyed the natural dictates of his *conſcience*. It is plain from his hiſtory given by *Moſes*, and moreover by *Paul's* account of him, that all human nature was *federally* conſidered in him, and was to be propagated from him. Had he remained in a ſtate of innocency, we muſt of neceſſity have received human nature in its original purity: but he, the fountain being *corrupted* by the poiſonous quality of ſin being intermingled with it by the Father of lies, the *ſtreams* are like to be defiled—which ſtreams are we. That human nature is corrupted, I have a three-fold knowledge of. 1ſt. The Lord poſitively declares it in his word. 2dly. My own experience teſtifies to it. 3dly. Daily matter of fact in the lives of thouſands confirms it. And this corrupt principle, I believe, is properly *inherent*, being interwoven with the very texture of our conſtitution. The following, I believe, are *ſome* of the unhappy conſequences of the fall, viz. loſs of original purity—loſs of the manifeſtation of the divine good pleaſure, an awful ſucceſſion of innumerable evils; in which I include, a dark underſtanding, vicious affections, an evil conſcience, and a ſtubborn will: in ſhort, that we are naturally dead in treſpaſſes and in ſins. All man's natural knowledge, which before furniſhed him with reaſons of duty, and taught him to walk humbly with his God, now, is ſo far from giving him comfort, or informing him how he may be reconciled to his offended Sovereign; that, ſo far as he retains it, he muſt be filled with horror and deſpair. But man being corrupted, his original impreſſions of Jehovah began to wear off, and through his own propenſity to evil, and the enemies lying injections, he entertains falſe notions of God, and goes

about upon ſome vain preſumptions to reconcile himſelf to the Lord, and obtain his favour; though *every* ſuch attempt is a freſh proof how ſadly he is fallen from his original knowledge of the *true* God.

In order that the divine character might be reſcued from the miſrepreſentations man had given of it, as well as that the offence might abound, the moral law was added. This is a perfect tranſcript of the divine Being: it forbids ſin, ſhews the evil of it, and condemns for it, and is under *all* diſpenſations a *rule of obedience*, and a fixed ſtandard of righteouſneſs. This revives the dictates of natural conſcience, and enforces them; ſo that neither the law, nor the natural conſcience, can work any thing in the *guilty*, but *wrath*. Both declare the neceſſity of an unſpotted righteouſneſs to appear in before God; both ſhew the impoſſibility of pardon, without perfect ſatisfaction being given for the offence; both teach, that where *mercy* is exerciſed, it muſt be in ſtrict conſiſtency with conſummate juſtice, though neither the one nor the other can inform us where to find either. Now I believe that the GOSPEL is the *only* place where we can learn this: there, in the *finiſhed* work of Immanuel, I behold a *juſt* God and a Saviour! Here natural conſcience receives its fulleſt impreſſions of the divine character, and the holy law its higheſt honours, while mercy and truth, with reſpiendent glory, *unite* in the ſinners ſalvation. But here it may be expected that I ſhould be particular:—The goſpel, I believe, is the production of infinite, eternal, counſel and wiſdom; a plan formed, in all its beautiful connection, before the world began. That the ETERNAL determined to glorify his perfections in the ſalvation and glorification of an innumerable number of ſinners, and to this end *perſonally* choſe them *in his Son*, before the world began: and whatever

ever diſtinctions may be made between the abſolute decree, and the foreknowledge of God, whoever admits the latter (and *who* ſo impious as to deny it?) does in fact, confeſs the former; for if Jehovah had preſcience of all events that ſhould take place in time, from eternity, then they muſt take place in the order in which he foreſaw them, or his knowledge could not be perfect. I cannot think that either the happineſs of his *choſen*, or the miſery of the *reſt*, is the ultimate end of election, but rather the praiſe of the glory of his ſovereignty. Every *impotent* attack on this doctrine by the pride of man, I believe, is ſilenced in the *word of truth*. Further: I believe that God manifeſted his purpoſe of grace to man, after the fall, and that in the fulneſs of time God ſent for his Son into the world, to bring the many ſons to glory, whom he had predeſtinated to be heirs with Chriſt. This choſen race, indeed, in the eternal purpoſe, ſtood connected with Chriſt, their covenant-head; but when God brought his firſt begotten into the world, he *actually* took part with them in their nature; for both he that ſanctifieth, and they who are ſanctified, are all of *one*. Hence, being their kinſman, he could righteouſly engage for them; but having to pacify God, and perform a work that ſhould be beneficial to *others*, it became abſolutely neceſſary that the mediator ſhould be God. And moreover, it was required, that he be GOD-MAN in unity of perſon.

Again: I believe, that *Immanuel* appeared under the law, as the repreſentative of *his* people, in which capacity it was a righteous thing in God to lay on him the iniquities of them all, though it was an amazing diſplay of his ſovereignty; that by his perfect *obedience*, he fulfilled, in it sutmoſt extent, whatever the law demanded: and by the complicated ſufferings which he endured, when the *wrath of God* lay hard

upon him, ſin received puniſhment to the *full* extent of its deſert, and that divine juſtice could not require more ſatisfaction than it obtained in the death of Chriſt. I believe that Jeſus, *as his people's Surety, died under the wrath of God*, and that his reſurrection from the dead is an infallible proof, that the work which he declared *finiſhed*, was well pleaſing to God, and is ſufficient *in itſelf* to declare him *juſt* in juſtifying *the ungodly* who believe, as they ſtand condemned by his holy law. Take away this ſubſtantial evidence of the ſufficiency of the Redeemer's work, and I frankly confeſs, that I am without hope! Not all that men can ſay, nor all that I can *feel*, will quiet my guilty conſcience; but from my inmoſt ſoul I believe, upon the fore-mentioned evidence, and its import, that the blood and righteouſneſs of Chriſt *alone*, are ſufficient to deliver me from all condemnation, recommend me to the favour of God, and give me a title to everlaſting glory.

I believe that the Holy Spirit inſpired the apoſtles of our Lord, to record the tranſactions of his life and death, and the peculiar evidence of its extenſive efficacy adverted to. This record which God has given of his Son, is the goſpel, or glad tidings of the kingdom, and is an *univerſal* proclamation to *ſinners* in general, of pardon, juſtification, ſanctification, and eternal life, as the free gift of God, through Jeſus Chriſt. I believe that no preparations, requiſites, or qualifications whatever, are required of the creature, in order to meeten him for this great ſalvation; but that, ſimply as a ſinner, every one who hears the goſpel is encouraged, upon the faithful word of God, to take Chriſt, and all the bleſſings of eternal life, freely. Here I confeſs the neceſſity of the work of the Spirit of God. Man in his natural ſtate may ſpeculate upon the goſpel, and obtain *natural* notions of theſe things, but

but no one ever did, or ever can, underſtand the ſpiritual import and glory of the goſpel, but as taught by the Holy Spirit. I believe this glorious agent teaches *only* by the *written word.* The whole will of God is revealed there; and he never works *ſeparate* from, much leſs oppoſed to, it.

Now by his almighty agency *dead* ſinners are *made* to hear the word, are regenerated thereby, and made new creatures. The word is the ſeed: the life of Chriſt is implanted in the heart of the *Redeemed* by it, John v—24. He that hath my word, and believeth on him that ſent me, hath everlaſting life—is paſſed from death unto life. In this way, I believe faith is the gift of God,* i. e. when the ſpirit of Truth enlightens the underſtanding, to perceive the ſpirituality of divine Truth, his teaching is attended with demonſtration and power, which works *in the ſoul* a *real* perſuaſion of the nature, extent, and efficacy of the finiſhed work of the Redeemer; this perſuaſion, I believe, is grounded *ſolely* upon the record which God has given of his ſon, in conſequence of which the ſoul comes to, and receives, the Lord Jeſus as a preſent Saviour. Notwithſtanding I would acknowledge, there are degrees of faith, and muſt neceſſarily be ſo while we know but in part. If I am deſired to define faith more fully, I beg leave to quote *Paul* upon the ſubject: "Faith is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not ſeen."* I believe the ſoul becomes *juſtified* by the righteouſneſs of faith, or that divine teſtimony which faith

* It is believing the record which God has given of his Son: but I hope I ſhall not be miſunderſtood here.—I believe a natural man may have a full perſuaſion of this, in the ſenſe in which he underſtands it, but no natural perſon can underſtand it. The great difference between true converts and all others, is pointed to by our Lord, Matth. chap xiii. One *underſtands* the word of the kingdom, the other underſtands in a wrong ſenſe, and therefore cannot have equally precious faith with the apoſtles.

faith receives as *infallibly* true. Juſtification is a law term, and conſiſts in a judge declaring a perſon acquitted from all judicial charges; righteous in the eye of that law by which he is judged. In juſtification, the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is *imputed* to the believer, who is made the righteouſneſs of God *in him*; in the ſame way as Chriſt is *made ſin* for his Elect.—In this act, I believe the ſubject is conſidered as *ungodly*, ſo that neither in the divine eye, nor in the ſinners, is there any reſpect had to any worthineſs *in the creature*, but this righteouſneſs is unto and upon all them that believe, for there is *no* difference.

All who believe, receive full, free, and everlaſting pardon of all their ſins: *full*, becauſe his blood cleanſeth them from all ſin; *free*, becauſe it is *forgiveneſs* of ſin according to the riches of his grace; *everlaſting*, becauſe Jehovah blots out their tranſgreſſions as a thick cloud, and will *no more remember* their ſins!

I believe further: that this glorious goſpel implanted in the *heart* in regeneration, is the *ſole* ſpring of ſanctification.—Juſtification is a ſingle act of grace, and terminates in a freedom from puniſhment, and a right to life. Sanctification is a work within us, is progreſſive, and terminates in the deſtruction of ſin's reigning power. The more the ſpirit of Truth increaſes our knowledge of, and faith in, the goſpel; the more our underſtanding is enlightened, our affections ſpiritualized, our conſcience purged, and our will bowed, and in this conſiſts the progreſs of our ſanctification, 2 Cor. iii. 18; though I am very far from thinking that nature is converted, or the fleſh ſpiritualized. Gal. v.

The neceſſary and inſeparable conſequence of this, is *good works*. Sanctification through the Truth is the cauſe, good works the effect; ſanctification the root, holineſs the fruit—I believe that though good works

are

are not our title to, or qualification for, juſtification—or cauſe of our ſanctification—yet that they are evidences of *both*, ſo that without them our profeſſion is vain, and our faith dead. To conſtitute a work *good*, I believe the *love of God* muſt be ſhed abroad in the heart, as the living principle of action. The revealed will of God, in which I include the *moral law*, muſt be the rule, and the glory of God the end of our obedience. The evangelical motives to them, the glory of God, the mercies of God, the end of election, calling, and adoption: their uſe, to prove the truth of our profeſſion before men—to ſtop the mouths of oppoſers—and for the uſe and benefit of men.—Thus I believe, that where-ever the goſpel is known clearly, it will be felt powerfully, and where it is *felt* powerfully, it will produce the fruits of righteouſneſs in the life. In this way which I have been declaring, I believe that the eternal purpoſes of Jehovah, concerning the ſalvation of his elect, are brought about.

Now as the apoſtolic miniſtry conſiſted in teaching the things concerning the *kingdom* of God as well as preaching Chriſt and him crucified; it may be expected, that I ſhould ſay ſomething about my views of the goſpel church ſtate.—The Jews looked for the appearance of this kingdom; but as they had been miſtaken about the appearance of the promiſed King, ſo alſo they were in the nature of this kingdom. John the Baptiſt proclaimed it *at hand*; ſo did Jeſus; but it never was eſtabliſhed till Chriſt aſcended into the heavens, and angels and principalities became ſubject unto him. The *nature* of this kingdom is ſpiritual, John xviii. 36. My kingdom is not of this world. The bulk of its ſubjects are in glory, beholding the King in his beauty; and it makes its appearance here among the *few* who are of the TRUTH, and hear Chriſt's voice. Hence I conclude, that it cannot be *national*, and that

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every national eſtabliſhment, and every diſſenting congregation, framed upon human authority, and cemented by ſecular ties, ſtands oppoſed to this *heavenly kingdom*. The truth of Chriſt, or the *pure* goſpel of ſalvation, is the foundation upon which the New Teſtament church is built; and by the ſame precious truth, its ſubjects are cemented. None in heaven or earth have a right to appoint *laws* in this kingdom, but Chriſt the anointed King; and no perſon can truly acknowledge him as King in Zion, that does not obey the laws which he has made. Now for the teſt of every one's obedience who confeſs him with their mouth, as well as precious means of drawing near to, and holding communion with, him, he has appointed ſeveral ordinances, among which are *Baptiſm*, and the *Supper*, which repreſent in public ſigns the bleſſings of this kingdom. Neither of theſe ordinances can be of the leaſt ſervice to any but true believers, becauſe none but *they* can underſtand thoſe things which are therein repreſented.

That Baptiſm is a ſtanding ordinance in the church, I believe from the nature of the kingdom;—it cannot be moved, Heb. xii. 28. But to break the laws, is the moſt effectual way to undermine it. The deſign of the ordinance—a practical renunciation of *error*, and acknowledgment of the truth—a proteſt againſt the prevailing traditions of the age, and a confeſſion of evangelical truths; and moreover, from the promiſe of Jeſus to be with his miniſters to the end of the world, in enforcing and adminiſtering it. True believers are the *only* proper ſubjects; and the only mode of adminiſtration, immerſion of the whole body in water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. To change either *mode* or *ſubject*, under any pretence whatever, is an impious attack upon the ſovereignty of Chriſt our King; and I hope ever to maintain the

the importance and neceſſity of this goſpel inſtitution.

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper repreſents diſciples united in *one* body, partaking of their one common Lord in all his ſalvation fulneſs, by the outward ſymbols of bread and wine. Believers here behold *one* glorious righteouſneſs, the ground and hope of their calling; *one* grand fountain of ſpiritual ſupply, alike common to them all:—here the diſtinguiſhing work of the Son of God, received by faith through the eating of the bread, and drinking of the wine, deſtroys thoſe diſtinctions between them, which their pride would prompt them to make. Beſide theſe two leading ordinances, there are preaching the word, public and ſocial prayer, mutual converſation, and the new command of brotherly love to be attended to. The church, I believe, is veſted with power to chuſe her own officers, to receive members, and expel them when unruly. The proper officers are *Paſtors*, *Elders*, or *Preſbyters*, who are to give themſelves to prayer, and the miniſtry of the word: and *Deacons*, whoſe employment is to receive contributions, take care of the poor, and ſerve tables. The communion of ſaints is a ſubject ſo copiouſly inſiſted upon in the New Teſtament, that *no* perſons can make *that* their rule of faith and practice, and live in the neglect of it. The confeſſion of the mouth can only be confirmed by a *practical* ſubmiſſion to the laws and ordinances of this heavenly kingdom: nor can I ſee what *ſubſtantial* evidence any profeſſor has of being a diſciple of Chriſt's, while he lives in the known omiſſion of any ordinances of the goſpel diſpenſation. In an uniform attention to theſe things, the believer is bid to expect increaſe of grace, and may *ſcripturally* hope, that he ſhall hold on his way, and is authorized to take the comfort of all thoſe promiſes which have reference to the final perſeverance of the ſaints in

faith

faith and holineſs. The doctrine of a *true* believer infallibly enjoying the heavenly inheritance, I from my heart believe—the covenant of grace, the perfections of Jehovah, the union between Chriſt and his people, and the precious promiſes of a faithful God, all ſecure it. But I have no other idea of a believer perſevering, than one running the race ſet before him, looking unto Jeſus, and bringing forth the fruits of righteouſneſs. To conclude:—I believe that the ſaints ſhall have their bodies raiſed from the dead, and faſhioned like unto Chriſt's glorious body; that all the redeemed ſhall be everlaſtingly filled with the fulneſs of him that filleth all in all; but that the wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment!—That whatever reflections corrupt men may caſt upon the God of purity, as being in any ſenſe the cauſe of ſin, or any of his decrees the cauſe of the ſinner's damnation, it will then appear that ſin originated in the creature, and that ſin *alone* is the cauſe of their condemnation. If it be thought neceſſary that an apology ſhould be made for expreſſing myſelf poſitively, I only have to ſay, that I have, by requeſt, taken in hand to ſet forth in order, a declaration of thoſe things which are *moſt ſurely believed* among us. But however poſitively, I hope in the fear of God to maintain *divine truth*. I have every reaſon to be diffident in myſelf: I hope I am conſcious, in ſome meaſure, what a poor, weak, fallible creature I am, and how much I ſtand in need of the prayers of the weakeſt ſaint: a prevailing ſenſe of which, I hope, will keep me humble, watchful, and prayerful, and ready *candidly* to hear the reproof or inſtruction of any of my brethren. Brethren pray for me, that I may ſtudy to approve myſelf unto God a workman that needeth not to be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and be, in all things, praiſe-worthy—an example to the flock. *Amen.*

THOUGHTS

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ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN

SANDEMAN AND CUDWORTH.

BOTH *Sandeman* and *Cudworth* agree, that "*God is well pleaſed in his beloved Son.*" That this is the ſole requiſite to juſtification: that the moſt guilty are accepted herein, without more; and that whoever believe this, are the bleſſed perſons to whom God imputes righteouſneſs without works:—that this is the central point and ſpring of true Chriſtianity; ſo that to ſeek acceptance and peace in any other way whatever, is to contradict this truth, and ſprings from pride and ſelf-righteouſneſs. But their difference lies here:—*Sandeman* pleads that the great difficulty with a ſinner is, how the juſt God can become a Saviour, or be juſt in juſtifying. That the goſpel ſolves this by the teſtimony before us, that all the joy a perſon has in firſt believing, is, that ſuch a righteouſneſs is provided, and that there is a *poſſibility* of his being ſaved:—that ſuch an one labours in painful deſire and fear, till he becomes aſſured of his own part in the divine righteouſneſs: that this makes out his perſonal claim, and in this way he arrives at a particular application of what he before believed in general.

On the other ſide, *Cudworth* pleads that the pinching point with a ſinner is, not ſimply how ſhall I know that the juſt God can be a Saviour; but how ſhall I have

ſuch a righteouſneſs as he requires? That the teſtimony before us anſwers this, by bringing the divine righteouſneſs near in the goſpel, and conveys it in ſuch words as directly to ſhew, that it is for *every creature that hears it.*—That without any further enquiry, the guilty ſinner may ſay, "*He loved me, and gave himſelf for me,*" and aſſure himſelf of eternal life, without taking into conſideration any of the effects of the goſpel whatever. *That it is this appropriation that gives a conſcious poſſeſſion and enjoyment of that which juſtifies*; and that the want of ſuch an appropriation, is that ſin of unbelief which has condemnation entailed upon it.

I agree with both, that God is well pleaſed in his Son, and that the work of Chriſt is the *ſole* requiſite to juſtification. *Sandeman*, notwithſtanding the many great things he has ſaid, is moſt certainly very wrong in pleading that the goſpel record believed, gives no more comfort to the mind than what a *bare poſſibility* that we ſhall be ſaved, will afford; for it is plain, that no one can believe the goſpel report, that excludes himſelf from the number of thoſe to whom it ſays, "*He that believeth ſhall be ſaved*". And it is equally plain, that when the goſpel is believed, peace of conſcience, or a deliverance from that wrath which the law works, will be the immediate effect, which could not be if there was nothing more in that teſtimony than a *mere poſſibility* of ſalvation. Faith is the ſubſtance of things hoped for; and when any one is begotten again by the report of Chriſt's reſurrection from the dead, he directly has a *lively hope*, grounded upon that word which he believes:—ſo that if any one proceeds to labour in a way of painful deſire and fear, to come to peace of conſcience and a goſpel hope, nothing is more plain than that he hath not heard and learned of the Father, for *ſuch* come to Chriſt,

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and find reſt to their ſouls. He that believeth enters into reſt, and ceaſes from any work whatever to obtain reſt. So that it is plain, that to labour in painful deſire and fear, in order to get peace of conſcience, is totally incompatible with the belief of the truth.

Cudworth, without doubt, is right in pleading that the goſpel contains more than a poſſibility of being ſaved; but is wrong in ſaying, *that eternal life is given to every hearer of the goſpel*; for the gifts of God are without repentance;—and it is plain, many hearers of the goſpel will periſh eternally. Beſides, if every hearer has eternal life given him by God who cannot lie, then it follows, that ſuch a gift is not ſufficient *in itſelf* to ſecure that life to any one; ſo that there muſt be ſomething more (however much Mr. *Cudworth* exclaims againſt it) to ſecure this gift, ſeeing that many to whom the gift itſelf is made, finally periſh. Now nothing is more evident from Mr. *Cudworth's* own words, than that he makes the ſame uſe of "*Appropriation*" that Mr. *Sandeman* does of his "*Painful deſire and fear*," for he tells us, that it is neceſſary to the conſciouſneſs or enjoyment of that which juſtifies:—neither is there any account in the ſcriptures of a perſon's firſt believing, being any thing more than a perſuaſion that what is teſtified in the goſpel, is true. And when any perſon is taught of God, in hearing the goſpel, to believe it, both the painful deſire and fear, and the appropriation, are ſuperſeded; for it is the ſovereign power of God, or the ſpirit of truth, accompanying the written word, that gives the truth a poſſeſſion in the ſoul; and this brings a conſciouſneſs and enjoyment of that which juſtifies, without leaving room for that which Mr. *Cudworth* would plead for; whereas both he and Mr. *Sandeman* ſuppoſe it poſſible for the truth to be believed, without the enjoyment. Indeed, *Cudworth* altogether

altogether denies the influence of the Spirit, and ſo ſubſtitutes his own appropriation in its place. Neither the one nor the other of their phraſes are ſcriptural, nor the ideas conveyed by them; the truth lies between them both:—Thus, when any ſinner is taught of God to believe on Chriſt, he is juſtified, and obtains peace by what he believes; but he cannot have aſſurance that he has believed, until his faith works by love in keeping Chriſt's commandments.

FINIS.